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LETTERS

TO THE

LADIES.

Job Lonsley's Book

THE SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

By the E D I T O R.

THE celebrated author of
Tom Jones, in one of his
initial chapters, tells us,
that the writing it cost
him more pains than the book to
which it is prefixed; and I believe
it will hold true of every writer,
that his preface is generally more
laboured than the rest of his per-
formance. The necessity of saying
something, when a man has exhaus-
ted his invention and has nothing
left

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left to say, is indeed a disagreeable situation; and I suppose, the reason why most of these preliminary discourses are but so many excuses for writing no better; and which would hold equally good for not writing at all.

It cannot be denied however, that they have their use. For though we may have read the book through, without knowing any thing of the author; in the preface we are admitted to a very intimate acquaintance with him. He there vouchsafes to tell us his design; the many avocations he has met with in pursuing it; the importunity of his friends; and his ill habit of body. Particulars, which are now, I think, generally allowed to be of equal importance to every reader.

NOTWITHSTANDING all this, it is almost impossible to conquer the aversion some people have to writing,
and

P R E F A C E.

and others to reading of prefaces; so that after a work is finished, it is no uncommon thing to desire a friend to introduce it to the public.

THE following collection of letters was put into my hands, with leave to print them, if I thought proper, and would say something prefatory to the reader. And as they come from ladies, I do not think myself at liberty to make any alterations, or drop the least hint where I had them.

BUT though, as the title declares, they were chiefly intended for the fair sex, yet it is to be hoped, that such of the other, as shall think fit to peruse them, will receive some instruction; or, if they should read only for amusement, will not be wholly disappointed.

THE essence of every good performance (as has been often remarked)

consists in duly blending these particulars. Whoever can please and improve us at the same time, will always be sure of a great majority of readers. But to instruct, and neither tire nor disgust—there lies the difficulty.

MANY attempts have been made, and many more are daily making, to attain this end. Characters drawn from real life, and occurrences that never did, nor ever will happen in any life, have met with almost an equal reception. And so eager has the appetite been for adventures, that it has digested them in the lump, however low, trifling, or improbable.

NOR are the narratives of matters of fact less liable to objection, if the agents are either above or beneath our notice. Thus, though it may be proper, for many reasons, to inspect his accounts; few people I believe, would regard the *history* of a church-

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a church-warden. In like manner, if the papers of a prime minister should be found to contain nothing but a series of blunders and mismanagement; would any reader, except his successor, be benefited by the publication?

THE variety of incidents in human life, has enabled here and there a writer, by keeping within these extremes, to furnish out a great number of scenes both interesting and diverting, from that class of mankind which lies most upon a level with readers in general; and which is now, so far from being exhausted, as fruitful a subject for praise, pity, and ridicule, as it was before those gentlemen undertook to describe it.

FOR no two men ever differed more, than the same man sometimes differs from himself. When we fancy we have taken in a whole character, and know every thing blameable or praiseworthy

worthy belonging to it; some latent foible or excellence breaks forth, that convinces us of our mistake, and places an old acquaintance in a new and unexpected, but, at the same time, a just and true light.

THE character of Falstaff would have been inimitable, had he made his appearance only as an old, fat, lying, cowardly, witty fellow; but we are told, that Queen Elizabeth did not think him complete, till she had seen him in love; and that to this royal criticism we owe "The merry Wives of Windsor." With all due respect to the memory of that great princess, it would have been an amiable addition to *her* story, to have been told, that she rewarded the poet as he deserved; a circumstance that no pen has recorded. A cotemporary bard, of more resentment than genius, would certainly have fired at such a neglect; and perhaps have immediately set about

"The

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“The Tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots,” instead of *Sejanus*, or *Catiline*.

BUT it is now high time to acquaint the readers with what they are to expect from the following collection. They may be pleased then to understand, that the authors, having no mind to multiply the number of romances, and yet being willing to convey, under a proper disguise, some hints that might be of service to their sex, set up a correspondence, in which several characters of their acquaintance are occasionally introduced. A dry bead-roll of precepts, they concluded, from the little demand usually made for such works, would scarce recommend themselves without the name or sanction of some *Philosopher*; and examples, unless drawn from the life, must be unnatural, and, consequently, insignificant. Some caution, however, was necessary in the use of the latter;

latter; and provided the lesson they designed to inculcate, or the moral of the fable, was apparent, they should not trouble themselves much (they said) though the drawings were but indifferent; for that these were intended rather as sketches than pictures. I could not help owning the reasonableness of the excuse, tho' I wished, at the same time, a few more pains had been bestowed on this particular; for many a sorry performance has had a run, merely by dint of a good set of cuts.

If, after all, any lady's likeness should be strong enough to stare her full in the face, and make her uneasy with herself; she may be pleased to reflect, that a change of features is always in her power; in which case the resemblance will vanish, and the Cynthia of this minute become the Venus of the next.

THE

THE partiality to the heroine of most of our modern romances, has occasioned the setting the rest of their female characters in a very contemptible light; and puts me in mind of a play of Dryden's, where one Mrs. *Christian* is introduced, who has nothing to do with the drama, plot, or sentiments; but comes in only to be debauched by the hero of the comedy; who, for this and other exploits, is rewarded with a fine lady and a great fortune. Distributive justice demanding that the punishment should be proportioned to the guilt of the delinquent; poetical justice, it seems, requires the contrary.

I SHALL detain the reader no longer than just to obviate another objection, which I suggested to the authors upon the first sight of their performance, viz. that one particular foible runs for the most part through the whole. But when it is considered, that it is allowed on all hands to be
a ruling

a *ruling principle*, and therefore very difficult to correct, and yet is reformed whenever it appears in these letters, to the satisfaction of the party herself; it may be presumed, that the frequent inculcating a point of principal concern, will not be looked upon as an unnecessary repetition.



SOPHRONIA.

SOPHRONIA;

O R,

LETTERS to the LADIES.

LETTER I.

SOPHRONIA to AMORET.

Dear madam,

 **HOUGH** it is always a great satisfaction to hear from you, yet I must confess your last gave me great concern, as it told me of the insipid, not to say unhappy, life you lead with your husband. I cannot give you a greater instance of the friendship that has always subsisted between us from our childhood, than in undertaking to be your physician, and cure you of this imaginary disease; for believe me, my dear, it is an imaginary one, the unhappiness

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pinefs you complain of. I am inclined to do this as well upon Philander's account, whom I was instrumental in promoting to the honour (as he then called it) of being your lover, and afterwards your spouse. Happinefs cannot be fo far off as you feem to infinuate: that taftelefs way you live in at prefent with him, may be owing to other caufes than you are willing to allow. I knew him to be a man of honour and virtue, or I would not have recommended him to fo good a friend as yourfelf; and I am firmly of opinion, that abundance of amiable qualities would fhew themfelves in his converfation with you, provided he had proper invitations from you to difplay them. You may remember, (my good friend will excufe the freedom I ufe towards her) that as foon as ever you grew big enough to wear a gold watch, you valued yourfelf too much upon that and other pretty ornaments; and looked upon us, who had none of thofe fineries, with great contempt, till my guardian Sir Thomas was fo indulgent as to let me have the fame. For I told him, as my fortune was equal to your's, I did not care to be overlooked by you. But ftill there was fomething difobliging in your behaviour; fomething of too violent an attachment to your own will. Several times,

times, when we have gone in the same coach upon a visit, or a party of pleasure, though we were very good friends when we first stepped into it, you have quarrelled with me before we had drove fifty yards. I looked upon this only as a childish behaviour, which I hoped would wear off as your years advanced; but from the complaints in your letter, I perceive the humour still continues. Now this is the thing I want to remove: and if I can but persuade you to be contented with your own happiness, and think yourself, what all the world believes you have the greatest reason to be, I doubt not but you will be so in reality.

PHILANDER's fortune, with yours, which you know was but small in comparison of his, make a complete thousand pounds a year. Consider what an advancement this was to you in the first place; and he expressed his affection for you, all the time of his courtship, in the sincerest manner. The presents he made you are strong proofs of it. I saw him pay 150l. for your new watch and etwy; 70l. for your diamond buckle; and 30l. for your snuff-box; besides other things, which I know cost a great deal, but cannot now recollect. Let me teach you, my dear, to make all these pretty things

subservient to your own ease and content; which will be done best, by giving you a sketch of the life my spouse and I lead. You know my fortune was the same as yours, and my dear's estate makes up near 500l. a year, which is but half your income, and yet we are a great deal happier. What should be the reason of this difference? Money it is not, that's certain; for if it were, you should be, by arithmetic, twice as happy as I: neither is it beauty; for though you are very pretty, yet you know we were both thought equal in that particular:—but I am to tell you how we two live together. The very instant he put the wedding ring upon my finger, I considered, that I was now in the power of another; and therefore resolved to part with so much of my own, freely, as I knew I had no right to keep, and to say the best of it, was not worth keeping, viz. my caprice, or, in plain English, my own will. I have since made it an inviolable law to myself, to study to oblige the man from whom I am to derive all my happiness in this life. You know he is brother to old Sir Edward Manly, who taking a dislike to him, has cut off the entail, and resolves to spend the estate. For this reason, Erastus had a learded education, and took his degrees,

as

as I have heard from his acquaintance, with great applause. So that he often tells me, I spoiled his fortune, by throwing myself in his way, when he intended to betake himself to one of the three professions; and that I must make up to him in happiness, what he wants of those thousands he might have raised, he says merrily, if he had not thrown his books aside. Soon after we married, we retired hither to a country village, and to a very pretty seat new built by himself, where I hope to enjoy his dear company a great many years. We live very privately, our circumstances not allowing us to strike out into many gaieties, though some we have. He told me at our first coming into the country, my dear, I would not have you intirely throw off the air of the town, at least as to dress. I took the hint, and proposed to him my keeping a visiting day once a week: upon which, I constantly dress myself as if I were to go to court. If no company drops in, we take a turn in the chariot of three or four miles, come home by tea time, when your present, the silver kettle and lamp, make their appearance. He is always sure to treat me, at these times, with that complaisance a well-bred man shews to a woman of merit, and with a little more

distance than the relation of husband and wife would in strickness require. He says, he trifles in this manner, (if it really deserves the name of trifling) to prevent his sinking into that disagreeable moroseness which is too often subsequent upon matrimony; and that he has found this weekly demand of good-manners, with which he treats me, to have prevented him a thousand times from falling into peevish, fullen, or splenetic humours. After a little chearful and elegant supper, he finishes his bottle, and I take my leave; he retires to his study, whilst I prepare for bed. This is a part of the scheme we are pursuing; call it dull if you please, but it is not without a moral, though the tale may be insipid, which is, that every man, even the wisest, is to be managed by consulting his humour, and the foolishlest husband upon earth grows stubborn by crossing it. Observe this, and you'll be as happy in half a year's time, as

Your sincere friend

And humble servant,

SOPHRONIA.

L E T T E R

LETTER II.

To the same.

I HAVE been the longer before I could return the favour of yours, by reason of being from home three weeks. We have taken a ramble of near two hundred miles, seen abundance of fine seats, which the respective owners have made beautiful at the greatest profusion of expence, and came home but two days ago to our own little cottage. There is something so prodigiously magnificent, in their noble buildings, their grand salons, forty foot rooms, delightful staircases, fine paintings, and rich furniture, that I am surprized our quality and gentry can quit these enchanting habitations for a narrow coop'd-up house in London. Surely it must be owing to a mighty wrong taste, that any nobleman can leave a palace fit for a crown'd head in the country, with a garden to it like a little paradise; parks, woods, and waters laid out in the most exquisite taste, with a prospect of funny hills, rich vales, arable and meadow grounds, and all, or most of them, his own demesnes, and spend his days in town in a house not his own, and not

fixty feet square. It made me melancholy, when I saw these fine places without their proper inhabitants; and on expressing my concern to Erastus, he told me with a smile, my dear, we will enjoy their family seats for them, unless the quality come into our scheme of life; and then they would not run from happiness in possession, to seek it where 'tis impossible to be found. For, continued he, in town, every nobleman has an equal in rank or fortune; but in the country, none who are not his inferiors. The first is to some minds a severe mortification, and the last almost to the generality of people a great satisfaction: and therefore it was very well said by a rich commoner, who had been solicited by the ministry to be made a peer, that he had rather be at the head of the gentry, than at the tail of the nobility. As we made so large a tour, Erastus hired a pair of horses, so that we drove with six. For he said, as to convenience or pleasure, when they are to be had at no very great expence, it was silly to check either of them from a suggestion, that a chariot and six did not become a private gentleman, of only 500*l.* a year. But as I told you in my last, we live according to our own taste, and do not think it necessary to consult
other

other people; we found this convenience from our equipage, that noblemen themselves could not be better received than we were every stage we came at; and no doubt my husband was taken for one, every town he went through. For I was in a jacket and petticoat trimmed with gold lace, and he in his blue and gold. But the worst was, we had not attendance fitting our quality, viz. only one servant on horseback with arms. We made ourselves very merry every night at the people of the inns where we lodged, to see how puzzled they were, at not knowing what to make of us. Sometimes it was your lordship, or your honour, and I was your ladyship all the way. Thus we thought four or five guineas extraordinary, once in a twelvemonth, were not ill given to purchase a title, though it were to last but three weeks. When I came home, the first thing I received from my WOMAN, was your letter: you must consider, that as I was a lady but two days ago, I cannot immediately drop my stile, tho' betwixt friends, she is only your old acquaintance Betty, my upper maid. It was impossible to send it after me, because we had declared in the family before we went, that we should move from place to place with incredible expedition.

This is the reason, and must be my excuse, for not answering it sooner.

I AM glad my last gave you some diversion; and in return for your wondering what we can do with ourselves without company, I wonder as much at your being perpetually fond of it. What improvements can you make, and what entertainment can such a way of life afford you? People who are under a habit of rambling and shifting places, come to see you, not out of any regard, but merely because they do not know what to do with themselves; and only add to the furniture of your drawing room, by displaying a good suit of cloaths.

A LADY of the first quality did me the honour of a visit in town; the occasion was this: we chanced to meet at a relation's of mine in Pall-mall, when her grace drove up to the door. My chariot, which was new, moved off to let hers pull up. On her enquiring whose it was, she was told it belonged to a lady who was visiting there. When she came into the room, I could perceive something the matter with her, and after the first civilities to my cousin, her eyes brushed me over with a good deal of disdain; for I was in my full dress, and her ladyship in a dishabille, so that indeed I made the best

best appearance of the two. "Lawd, says she, you have the prettiest equipage below, your chariot is new I think," I told her, my husband made me a present of it about a fortnight before. "Well," says she, it is very handsome, and you are mighty fine: certainly black velvet is very becoming, but every body runs into it. Pray, who is your mantua-maker? well, I can't but say, our citizens daughters are in the right: and if a good substantial tradesman can afford to have such things for his wife, why should he not?"—With a great deal more of the insolence of quality, that is now and then bestowed upon us private gentlewomen. I told her ladyship (for I was not yet acquainted with her title) it was my misfortune to be the daughter not of a wealthy tradesman, but of a private country gentleman, who often lamented his not being placed in business here in London, from the silly humour of an old uncle, who dreaded of all things the degrading of his family, as he called it, by binding him out Apprentice. "Oh, says she, what you say is quite right; and so you are married?"—To a country gentleman too, says I, madam.—"And pray, how long do you stay in town?"—I told her, we thought of going

ing into the country in four days time. After I had stood the examination, she applied herself to my cousin, but what passed, I don't know, for I immediately took my leave and drove away. The very next day, just as I was going to pay another visit, her coach stopt at the door. The footman came up stairs, and said, the dutchess of Belmont was come to see me. Erasmus and I were greatly surprized to hear it; but he went down in a moment, and handed her out of her coach. I received her with all imaginable respect, and told her grace, I was prodigiously surprized at this condescention. She said, she came to take her leave, since she had heard me say, my stay in town would be so short. But I could perceive it was only a visit paid by her fine cloaths to mine. She was resolved to oppress me all at once, for she had I verily believe 10,000l. of jewels on: her cloaths were the richest I ever beheld. She looked like an angel. Her years are about the same as mine. She made amends for every thing that could disoblige the day before. For Erasmus, who has the art of making folks talk, gave the conversation such a turn, as soon discovered the dutchess had an excellent understanding, great good-nature, and liveliness; though I could not help

help observing, that she often sighed, and what you know is not thought the best manners, often looked on her watch, as if impatient to be gone. At those times I took the opportunity to wink upon Eraſtus, who preſently ſtarted ſomething new, which kept her from going. In ſhort, ſhe ſtaid with us four hours, made a thouſand apologies for ſo long a viſit, as it was the firſt, and ſaid, that whenever we came to town, ſhe would be ſure to continue the acquaintance. Then turning to me, wiſhed me all the happineſs I could propoſe to myſelf in the poſſeſſion of a man of ſenſe ; and fetched a deep ſigh, which ſpoke the bitterneſs of her very ſoul. We both waited on her to her coach, and after ſhe was in it, ſhe bowed to us very genteely as ſhe pulled up the glaſs ; but we diſcovered her handkerchief was held to her face as the coach went away. Well, ſays Eraſtus, turning to me, “ Cleora has her wiſh, ſhe weds “ a peer.”—What a treasure is the duke poſſeſt of, and either does not or will not know it. But my dear, we will not diſappoint the friends we ſhould have ſeen this afternoon, but go and ſpend the evening with them. The chariot had been waiting ſome time ; he ſaid he would ſet me down, and drive to his banker’s, and
be

be with me in half an hour. The gentleman at whose house we are to sup, is knight of the shire for the county of —; he was just that moment come from the house, and brought a nobleman along with him, who gave me his hand and led me in, whilst Sir Thomas and my spouse were talking. Such is the unaccountable liberty our young people of fashion give themselves, that in going only from the door up stairs, his lordship made love to me, with a thousand professions of inviolable fidelity, and the like stuff. I was very uneasy, and extremely surprized at coming into the room, where the lady, whom I will call Amanda, sat expecting me, who rose up and saluted my gallant by his title. We had not been in the room three minutes, before a servant came to let Amanda know Sir Thomas wanted to speak with her. When we were alone, I told his grace the overtures he had made me were very much unexpected, but — with that he offered to salute me. No, my lord, says I, keep your distance, or I will expose you; but as I was saying, you could not do a more obliging thing to my husband than make love to his wife, for he is prodigiously smitten with yours, (I was determined to sting him) and he is a man of gallantry I assure

assure you. "My wife, says he, how
"should he know any thing of my wife?"
My lord, replied I, the dutchess did me
the honour of a visit this afternoon, and
we parted but just now, and came hither
as soon as she was gone. While we were
talking Erastus came in. I introduced
him to the duke, told him who he was,
and that I had informed him we had just
parted from the dutchess. Nay then, says
he, I am resolved she shall conclude the
evening with us; but, says he softly to
me, "mum, not a word." That, said
I, is according as you behave yourself.
With that he withdrew, and returned with
the dutchess in half an hour, who is really
one of the finest creatures in the world.
Her grace was surprized to find Erastus
and me in the room, (for the duke had
not learn'd our names) and came up to
me with inimitable sweetness. I perceived
she had been in tears, but she endea-
voured to assume new spirits, and told
me she had a great desire to see me
once again, but thought she could never
have been so happy; for indeed, continu-
ed she, I was taken extremely ill as soon
as I left you, and if my lord had not
come as he did, I had been undressing for
bed. We all expressed a great concern to
hear her say this, and Erastus told the
duke

duke with a smile, it is a thousand pities so charming a patient should be sick, when I am sure your grace can cure her infallibly. “ Ay, says the duke, you are right; I will prescribe, and you shall be her apothecary.” So, thought I, does the wind sit there? Eraſtus returned immediately, no, my lord, my wife undertakes the ladies; I am only an under Galen to my own ſex, and I believe you want a doctor as well as the dutcheſs. “ If the dutcheſs wants one, replied the duke, I ſuppoſe Sir, you will take care to be in the way, and adminiſter a doſe of your converſation as a ſpecific.” I do not underſtand your grace, ſays Eraſtus.—“ No Sir, my meaning is plain enough;” and reddened exceſſively. My lord, ſays Eraſtus, I have been your phyſician before now, and you have felt the benefit of my preſcription. As to the dutcheſs, I never ſaw her till this afternoon.—Step to her grace, pray my lord, (for ſhe was gone into the next room) and we ſhall have time enough to explain afterwards. He did ſo, and found the dutcheſs in a great fright at what this would end in. He perceived the artleſs workings of her mind, and clapping his face cloſe to hers, aſked pardon for the terror he had occaſioned, and ſoothed her

in

in the tenderest manner. Sir Thomas and Amanda were in amaze at the behaviour of their guests, and I flew to Erastus, whom I found standing with his hands behind him all alone in the drawing-room. He asked how the dutchess did: my dear, says I, their graces I hope will be entirely one again. I told him what had passed, which pleased him extremely, and taking me in his arms, he cry'd, Sophronia, you never look'd so well in your life. Nothing, my dear, said I, can add to a woman's looks like a lover; and told him my lord's gallantry to me at my first coming in. "'Tis surprizing, returned Erastus, he should give way to that behaviour, which I am sure he condemns; he never was rakish at the university to my knowledge, but studied hard, and left an excellent character behind him. It was at that place I saved his life." Pray, my dear, how was that?—"Why at college he had the small-pox, the very worst sort; and the physicians said, that nothing would raise the pustules and bring them to perfection, but some young person's going into the same bed and holding him close in his arms. I did him this service; for my friends told me I had had the distemper, and he recovered upon my doing it; but I had like to have suffered
very

very severely. For my friends were deceived, and it proved that I never had the small-pox, since in four days time I came out with it, and had it to a great degree. He was prodigiously afflicted for me, and though he was quite recovered, yet I am persuaded if I had died, he would not have outlived it. This circumstance, or my person, (for what I speak of is fourteen years ago) the duke has forgot. But so long as I have the possession of my dear Sophronia, I can overlook those that overlook me." Whilst we were talking, the door opened, and his grace led in the dutchess, who shewed the utmost satisfaction as she advanced. The duke ran to Erastus, and, tenderly embracing him, asked ten thousand pardons for what had passed, and as many more for not recollecting him the first moment, when he had such obligations to him as should never have been forgot. But, says he, fourteen years make a great alteration; and when we were fellow collegians you wore your own hair. "And dirty linnen, replied Erastus." The duke smiled, and turning to me said, madam, you have the pleasure to think you are married to a gentleman of as great worth and honour as any in the whole world. I returned his grace my thanks for his
good

good opinion of my choice, and told him I had no way to express my gratitude for it, but by assuring him that he was the happiest man in the world, in being master of the heart of my lady dutchess: look at her, my lord; can your imagination form to itself a more accomplished or astonishing beauty? "It's owing to you, madam, and my dear friend here, replies the duke, that she'll be to me from henceforward the finest creature in the world." Well, said the dutchess, I cannot but say, you have both hit off this pretty well. But my lord, says she, do you know how late it is, we shall spoil Sir Thomas's supper. For we had been too much engaged to mind what the servant had let us know some time before, that his lady and master waited for us. We went down, and found a very elegant entertainment ready for us. The duke said, "Sir Thomas, we have lost you and my lady." Indeed, replied the good knight, you have not wanted us; I give your graces joy; and calling for a bumper, drank to the continuance of it, which was pledged by the whole company. We talked only of common things all supper time, because of the servants. But after the things were taken away, the dutchess addressing herself to Amanda, told her, it was

was the greatest happiness of her life the coming to her house, and she should always esteem her as her good angel. Amanda returned her civilities in the politest manner, and said, though Sir Thomas and she had not been the principal actors, yet their wishes were as sincere; and they both would have contributed as earnestly to do what was now done, as any persons whatever. "What do you mean by that, madam, asked Sir Thomas? we will not lose our share of merit in this business; for though we were not the principal actors, yet I think we can do the under parts to perfection. My wife, ladies and gentlemen, continues he, "fairly puts all characters to bed, so that there is no stirring out of my house this night." And sitting down again (for we had made a motion to be going) we chatted till between two and three, and then withdrew to our apartments. As soon as possible you shall have the sequel of this adventure from

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

WE did not get up very early, as you may suppose; the tea equipage was set out in the nicest order, and we waited only for the gentlemen, to begin breakfast. The knight came to us full dressed, Erastus and the duke were in morning gowns; I should have said, the duke and Erastus. What, dressed already, Sir Thomas? says his grace. "Yes, my lord, and I expected you had been so too; do not you intend to go to the house?" No indeed, replied the duke, I will not leave my wife this day; and taking hold of her hand, said, she is all the world to me, so I will leave you to take care of my country. "Nay, says the dutchess, my lord, by your own speech you must go with Sir Thomas; for if I am all the world to you, your country is part of that world; and to take care of that, is to take care of your wife." Faith, says the knight, her grace has hit you, and go you must: for I am sure you are too good a husband to suffer any part of your dutchess to be neglected. The duke smiled; and turning down his tea-cup, said, since he had given so good a reason, he would dress and go along with him.

The

The dutchess then proposed her coach should carry us all to dine at her house; and the duke told her, if dinner were later than usual, about an hour and half, he believed the house would be up, and he would wait on us. The knight said, he thought it was better to stay where we were, and instead of dining, to sup with her grace. I insist, replied she, upon seeing this good company at dinner, and therefore no wise reasons against it, Sir Thomas. "Why then, madam, I will give you a foolish one, and that is, I cannot stay my lord duke's hour and half extraordinary." Well, but if you are at the house, says the dutchess, you cannot come away; and therefore what signifies the hour and half you talk of? "Oh, madam, says he, for that I have an expedient: you must know, that a certain gentleman, whom nobody minds, serves me for a clock; when he begins to speak, I know 'tis time to eat, and always slip out, get a chop, drink my bottle, and come in time enough to hear his fourteenth blunder upon ways and means." This said, his grace and the knight left us. When they were gone, Amanda said, she only wished, Sir Thomas's friends would for her sake as well as his own, keep him from that same bottle he talks of.

of. "I will undertake to do it in a month, madam, says Eraſtus; though I believe he does not drink ſo much as he ſays." Very true, replied my lady, but his good-nature makes him reſuſe nobody, and that in time will, I fear, endanger his conſtitution; for generally ſome member of either houſe engages him, ſo that I have but little of his company.

To go on with my ſtory, I was firſt dreſſed, and came down into the dining-room, when the dutcheſs's woman was ſent to tell me, her grace deſired to ſpeak with me above. I went immediately. She took me by the hand, and placing me by her upon a ſettee, my dear Sophronia, ſays ſhe, I have had ſuch an accumulation of happineſs by your means, that I wanted impatiently to have you by myſelf, to expreſs my gratitude to you for it. I was in great confuſion, I replied, on account of her grace's compliment, which I was not ſenſible any thing I had done could deſerve; but only begged ſhe would permit me to have the higheſt eſteem for her merit, and the ſincereſt wiſhes for her happineſs. My dear, replied ſhe, the firſt good office you did me, was the agreeable reproof you gave me at lady Bellair's, where I fell into that inſolent way of treating you on account of your dreſs and equipage,

equipage, which people of our rank, who should know better, usually shew to those they think below them. The spirit of your reply had so good an effect upon me, that all the silly humour dissolved like a charm. I saw it was only a circumstance which was neither in your power or mine to acquire or prevent, that of being nobly born or not, that was the occasion of it; and that you had as much sense, beauty, and good-breeding, as any woman of quality of us all. I was going to interrupt her, but she went on. "I thought with myself, what is then the real difference between that lady and me? and resolved to see you again, and, if it were possible, come to an explanation. This is the first opportunity you know we have had, and dear Sophronia, let me sincerely beg your pardon." I would have spoke again, but said she, "my obligations to you for curing my mind of a folly too deeply rooted there, can never be sufficiently acknowledged. For I am now sensible, that I had accustomed myself to see other persons and things in the same wrong light. My lord duke informed me with the greatest pleasure of his owing his life to your dear Erastus; whom, like others of his quality, he says with shame to himself, he had

had suffered to slip out of his memory. He begs you by me, that a friendship which has so just a foundation, may be always continued. He is a profound admirer of your spouse, and talked about him above an hour this morning, before we came down to breakfast." Here her grace's woman let us know the coach was at the door; and Eraſtus having handed us in, ſeated himſelf, and we drove to the duke's. We were conducted into a noble room richly furniſhed; the wax-candles were all lighted to the number of twenty; a ſide-board of plate was ſet out in the grandeſt taſte, with every thing becoming the quality of our hoſts. The room looked into a garden, and had three doors which opened into three ſeveral bedchambers, and a fourth which led to the grand ſtair-caſe. Her grace welcomed us to her houſe very politely; but ſaid, as the time juſt before dinner was agreed on all hands to be the moſt taſteleſs part of the twenty-four hours, it was unlucky that the firſt time ſhe had the happineſs of a viſit from Eraſtus and me, it ſhould be that which affords no entertainment at all: what ſhall we do with ourſelves till dinner? "Any thing, madam, but what Sir Thomas does with himſelf, replied Eraſtus, which is, ſpoil our ſtomachs by

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a chop and a bottle." I have heard the duke talk of Sir Thomas's clock, said the dutchess; is he really such an orator as they both describe him? "He is thought so, returned Eraſtus, and I wonder very much he should be so fond of prating. For as a great liar is never believed when he speaks truth, so this honest gentleman is never regarded, when he deviates into sense. He is indeed looked upon as the stalking horse of his party. The skilful archers (which are but few on that side of the question) take their aim behind him, and usually shoot over or under him, that is, beyond his meaning. Indeed they always carry their point, but that is no proof of their being marksmen." This led us into the characters of some of the chief members in both houses, which Eraſtus sketched out in very lively colours to her grace. Amanda and I contented ourselves with hearing them, and only now and then stirred the fire as we stood round it. "Well, says the dutchess, it is five o'clock, and neither of our parliament men will come home, we will e'en sit down without them." I shall not describe the dinner, nor how heartily we fed, for we were all very hungry. Just as the things were removed, Sir Thomas came in, dressed in crimson velvet richly trimmed

trimmed with gold lace. As he entered, "the scene opens, cries the dutchess, and discovers Sir Thomas in his regimentals;" and rose up to receive him: why sure, continued she, these are not the cloaths you had on this morning? No, madam, sa's he, when I have that small trifle, the business of the nation upon my hands, I dress me in my every day cloaths; but in the grand affair of a visit to a lady, I put on my regimentals. "And yet, says Erastus, you have some there that pay the same compliment to you knights, citizens and burgeses, as you do to the ladies." True, says Sir Thomas, their patron gives them very rich liveries, and they seem to know nothing else but how to put them on: and I wonder they are so clean, for they do a deal of damned dirty work. But pray, says I, where is my lord duke? "I suppose, replies the knight, he is gone to put on his regimentals too, for I saw him into his dressing room.—Well, my lady dutchess, you have made such a conquest, as I never saw any thing like it in my whole life. He talked of nothing but you every step of the way; said, he had imprudently given occasion to some suspicions which were now, he hoped, at an end, and never would offend that or any other way to make you uneasy: so that I

hope you will both be as happy as your hearts can wish. Stay, says the knight, what have we here, (opening a door into one of the bedchambers) Oh, this I perceive is an *undressing* room. Faith, madam, we are all married, so you will excuse my freedom; but if I might advise, since his grace is in this good way, if he should desire to be private with you,"--- Amanda, to prevent his going any further, said, my dear, pray look in the glass, your wig stands all awry. I seconded her, as the knight was adjusting his countenance, pray, Sir Thomas, had you any debates to-day? how did your clock strike? P—x on him, says the knight, much as usual. So then, Eraustus replied, you went and took your bottle. "Yes indeed I did." I thought as much, said the dutchess. By this time the duke was dressed, and came to us. After we had chatted a while standing, we all fate down to the table; the dutchess at the upper end, Amanda and Sir Thomas at her right hand, myself and Eraustus on the other side, and the duke at the bottom. Upon enquiring whether his grace would not be willing to eat? "No, says he, I went with Sir Thomas, and took a chop and a bottle whilst his clock was striking. There was no other mischief done to-day, but

but spoiling a few dinners, and keeping me so long from this good company." Matters were not ready, I suppose, says Eraſtus. No, ſaid the duke, but we expect ſomething in a day or two. Here word was brought to Eraſtus, that a ſtrange odd ſort of a gentleman below waited to ſpeak with him. I will be hanged ſays Amanda, if it be not Joulth the attorney about the mortgage, and threw up the ſaſh; ay, there he is, bowing and ſcraping, and refuſing to come in, becauſe his boots are dirty. I am afraid, my lord, ſays Eraſtus, I muſt go down and wait upon Mr. Joulth, who does not ſeem inclined to do buſineſs here; and notwithstanding his preſent manners, and fear of diſobliging your houſe, is one of the moſt troubleſome overbearing fellows alive. Juſt as you pleaſe, replied the duke, though I ſhould be glad to ſee ſo odd a medley, if he could be prevailed with to walk up. This the attorney would by no means comply with; ſo Eraſtus and he retreated to tranſact their affairs at a tavern in the neighbourhood. When they were gone, the duke ſaid to Amanda, madam, there is certainly witchcraft in your houſe; I never knew what it was to be happy before yeſterday. If a man begins once to reliſh the ſweets of

virtuous love, he never would engage in any other amours. Let him but reflect, that the person that obliges him, though she appears to him a goddess, must depart from him a whore, and perhaps his footman may be a sharer with him in her favours; and he will never seek for pleasure any where but in the arms of his wife. Then turning to the dutchess, shew'd the company, that he had the art of mingling the profoundest respect with the most endearing behaviour. You had better, my lord, says Sir Thomas, step into the next room, and I will take my wife into the lobby in the mean time. But pray, says the duke, what is to become of Sophronia? Have you ne'er an Ovid's Epistles, or some pretty feeling poetry in your library, says the knight, for her to amuse herself with? by that time she has read a dozen pages, we shall be at leisure to wait on her again. Nay, says Amanda, my dear, we will all go into the library together; which we did, and busied ourselves for about an hour, among a very choice collection of books. When we returned into the dining room, the gentlemen had given us the slip; and upon enquiry, the footman told us, that he was just come in himself, and did not know his lord was gone out. But a very pretty young

lady

lady in pink-coloured satin, when asked where her master was, said, the earl of ——— came to let his grace know, that some discoveries were made of a design the ministers had to bring something into the house to-morrow, and that it stood every honest gentleman in hand to oppose it with the utmost vigour. That he and his friends were flying about town, to gather as many members of both houses as they could procure, to meet at a tavern in the Strand, to consult about the methods of opposing this affair: and his lordship bid me tell your grace, as he stepped into the coach, that he would not have the ladies expect either him or Sir Thomas at supper. The young creature then making a curtesy as we were all standing, blushed, and went out of the room with as good an air as if she had been a person of quality. As we sat down we smiled at our mistake; and the dutchess told us, that Mrs. Mary was the daughter of a gentleman of small fortune, and had been with her about a twelve-month. She is a very modest good girl, continued her grace; it is to be a match between her and my lord's valet, as I hear, and if so, (you see she is pretty well dressed) I will prevail with the duke to add something to her fortune. It was

not long before Mrs. Mary brought in the tea equipage. The dutchess enquired where the other servants were. She curtsy'd, and hoped her grace would let her have the honour to wait to-day, for she said, smiling very prettily, the rest of the servants were employed about the business of the nation; she being obliged to send them by the duke's order, to twenty or thirty different gentlemen, to give notice of my lord's desiring their company. Tea being over, Mrs. Mary withdrew, and we passed the rest of the afternoon in singing, the dutchess accompanying our voices upon a fine harpsichord. We were obliged to sup without the gentlemen, and after the cloth was taken away, Amanda expressed a great concern lest Sir Thomas should be engaged with the bottle again at night. I told her, where there was business of such consequence as theirs, she might be sure there would be no drinking. Besides, Eraustus (who has by this time done with Joul) will follow him, and prevent his taking too free a glass. Amanda replied, that my spouse was Sir Thomas's best friend, and they both had the greatest obligations to him. The dutchess desired to hear what they were; as she doubted not to find he was a general happiness to all his acquaintance.

ance.—I cannot conclude my letter more properly, my dear friend, than by sincerely wishing your good man may be to you, what Eraſtus is to

Yours, affectionately,

SOPHRONIA.



LETTER IV.

AMANDA began her narrative in the following manner. Eraſtus is a near relation of mine, bred up in the ſame houſe. He is four or five years older than myſelf. When he went to the univerſity, he conſtantly correſponded with me by letter, and it is greatly to his care and inſtruction that my notions of virtue are ſo ſtrongly fixed. One day after dinner he took me into the garden at my mother's ſeat, and told me, Amanda, you will pardon the freedom I am now going to take with you. I muſt be blind, continued he, if I did not ſee that it is not a matter of the greateſt difficulty for me to marry you. Bleſs me, ſaid I, what do

you mean? I never knew that you were any thing more to me than a mere stranger, or one whom I never saw. I know that, says he, as well as you; and therefore, lest the esteem we have always had for each other should take another turn, I take this method to prevent it. At the same time giving me a paper, which he said was a resolution of a case of conscience. We are not so nearly related, continued he, as to make our union unlawful by the laws of the land, but you will see in that account it would at best be only an evasion; and no marriage that is contrary to religion can be happy. But, says he, I would have you turn your thoughts towards matrimony, for it is my earnest desire to see you well disposed of; and if you think it may be for your service, I will assist you in it. I thanked him for his dealing so frankly with me, and told him I would consider of his advice: I was then twenty years of age, my fortune was in my own hands, and when an opportunity offered, I would change my condition; but says I to him, you know I must not go a courting. No, he replied, he would court for me: therefore pray let me know your terms, and what sort of a husband you would have, and I will get you one if possible. Why let me

me see, said I, you know my fortune is 40,000 l. I think that deserves a title, and a suitable settlement. "What do you call a *suitable* settlement, pray madam?" I replied 4000 l. a year. He shook his head, and said, my demands were very high. He believed he could get such a settlement, with a fool tacked to it; for without, it was not to be expected. You must abate, Amanda, if you propose to be happy in a husband that shall prove a friend and an agreeable companion. I thanked him for so seasonable a piece of advice, and considering once again, said, "40,000 l. is 2000 l. a year: an equal estate with a husband, makes 4000 l. a year. And what is there in this world's, this English world's happiness, that is not to be had with 4000 l. a year?" Yes, he replied, and a great deal within that sum, besides making a very handsome provision for your children. "I protest, said I, I never once thought of children: why then, cousin, a gentleman of a thousand a year, that is a scholar, and a man of virtue and honour; for I must have a husband that understands something which I do not. As for *dress* and *equipage*, *routes* and *assemblies*, I know as much of them, as most of the fine gentlemen who have made their pretensions

tensions to me. And though I can take a pleasure sometimes in looking in my glass, I could not bear to see nothing better than myself in one of your sex. So bring me such a man, and I will promise you I will not be cruel." Well, but how madam, says he, as to his person? "As to that said I, let him be *like you*, or if not, what you like; but don't forget a title."

THE next morning we talked further of this business, when he told me, he was upon returning to the university, and as the flower of all the youth in England was at those places, he would examine them both. At the same time I gave him a bank note of 500 l. to defray all expences he should be at on my account. He received it with a smile, and said he would make me a bill of whatever he laid out; and accordingly three months after, he delivered it to me stated D^r and C^r----

"So much, for making lord Archibald drunk, in order to discard him.---Ditto, to Sir Richard, for getting himself expelled the university and the graces of a fair lady.—Ditto, secret service to Mr. N—— the surgeon, for attending three weeks upon the honourable Charles Fairlove." For that was his way: he not only got acquainted with several himself, but laid traps

traps for them by others, to find out their particular foible, whether gaming, drinking, wenching, or any other vice, which might afterwards break out, and make me uneasy. Three hundred pounds was gone in this manner in three month's time, and no husband. Come, says he, cousin, I will bestow a further search, and not give it over yet. I had not heard from him a good while after he went away the last time, when at the end of the fourth month he sent me a little billet: "Dear Amanda, if you have a mind to be a lady, send or come to yours, Erastus." In a postscript there were directions where to find him. As I had a just opinion of his prudence, I thought it best to meet him myself, and therefore gave orders for my coach to be ready the next morning, and taking only my cloaths and my maid, set out for London. He came to my lodgings as soon as I had informed him I was in town, and told me he had been in the north after a young gentleman, a baronet, who came up with him. The duce, said I, you don't think to dispose of me by bargain and sale! No, he replied, the gentlemen did not know any thing of the business; but he is a man to my liking, with an estate of 2000 l. a year, but dipped by his father
for

for 10,000*l.* You shall see him. With good management you may clear the Estate without selling a foot of it, and I think, if you know your own happiness, you will not be cruel as you promised. He contrived to have us meet at a third place, where, the next day, I saw Sir Thomas. It is not material to describe the circumstances, but we did mutual execution, and fell violently in love with each other. He brought a young lady with him, to visit the family where we met, who sufficiently revenged me on Erastus, for he was shot through and through the heart by her; and in a quarter of a year, all matters being concluded, the same day I was married to Sir Thomas, and Erastus to Sophronia. The dutchess interrupting her, said, she was glad of it, for her heart went pit-a-pat for fear the young lady should prove to be somebody else. In a little time, (continued Amanda) Erastus gave us an estimate of our expences, and, by regulating them according to his scheme, we got the estate clear, and 10,000*l.* in cash. Sir Thomas says, he owes Erastus 50,000*l.* and has the highest and most grateful sentiments of his friendship. He is still so kind as to interest himself in our affairs; and is now gone to recover the 10,000*l.* we had saved,
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out of the hands of an attorney, who has had it upon mortgage, without paying a farthing interest for this year and half.

THE dutchess returned her many thanks for this short history of herself, and turning to me, said, she hoped I would acquaint her with mine. I told her grace, mine was a life of so little variety, both before and after marriage, that the relation could give her no entertainment. She replied, she wanted to know my life since I married, and not before; for, from Amanda's conduct and mine, in that state, she designed to form her own. Let me, said she, into the little circumstances of your life, merely what you do as a wife and a companion. I gave her grace the same account I did you in my first letter, and told her, my husband's chiefest pleasure was at home, and that we were seldom asunder. She was pleased to express her satisfaction at the account; and having sat up so late the night before, she said she would not detain us from our apartments any longer, upon which we withdrew.

LETTER

LETTER V.

THE next morning we were to breakfast with the dutchess in her dressing room; when Sir Thomas coming in, after the first compliments, "Pray neice, says he, where's your husband?" I told him, my lord duke had stole him away. "*Niece*, says the dutchess! why you and she are both of an age; at least you appear to be so." No, madam, he replied, I am just five years older. Her father was my mother's son by a former husband. He was near sixteen when I was born. My father's estate joined up to her's in the country, and when she was a widow he courted and married her. She was but thirty six when she married the second time, and I have been told was a very great beauty. Sophronia is very like her picture. My father died when I was about eighteen years old, and left my brother my guardian, and a very faithful one he was. He took all imaginable care of my education, (but could not get my estate out of debt, by reason of some jointures that did not fall in) was an excellent scholar, and a worthy man in every respect. He married very young, and left three daughters, which,

which, dying, he committed to my management. His estate was to be sold, and equally divided among them, which amounted to 5000l. a piece. Her sisters married unhappily. One to Joulst the attorney, the other to an Irish conjurer, who plaid away her fortune, which I suppose killed the poor girl. Though he was giving an account of the misfortunes of my family, I could not help smiling at his expression; but the dutchess laughed out-right. "Who ever expected, says she, to hear of an *Irish* conjurer?" He could be no other, replied the knight, very gravely, for he certainly must have dealt with the devil, or he never could have prevailed over my niece; for Betty was a delightful girl, and would have made a wife for an emperor. However, she died, and I heard this summer, that he was reduced to his last hundred pound. And this, madam, continued he, is the history of my uncle-ship. Her father (pointing to me) was one of the best of men, and I am glad he did not live to see two of his daughters so wretchedly disposed of; which I did all I could to hinder, but to no purpose. "Pray, says I, Sir Thomas, what arts did the attorney make use of to gain my other sister? for though he may deal with the devil, nobody takes him for a conjurer."

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I will tell the ladies, says he, drawing a chair, "Molly, in my opinion, (do not be angry niece) was the greatest beauty of the three. Her first husband was a very pretty young fellow, but lived with her not above six months, at the end of which he died of the small-pox, leaving her possessed of 300l. a year, besides her own fortune. She forgot her spouse a little too soon, and I shall not tell the company in how short a time chance threw our present hero in her way. He was born of the wife of John Joulst of Hammersmith, who at the age of sixteen, was turned out of a parish school because he could never learn to read. John, not having wit enough for any thing else, took to the honest employment of nicking, frothing, and double scoring, at an alehouse in Fleet-street; and in process of time, by saving the benevolence of his master's customers at Christmas, and other perquisites, had scraped up twenty pounds. Upon which John grew saucy, insolent, and amorous, and in short, marries his fellow servant, Susan the scullion. Then, with his 20l. fortune, and the assistance of a crediting brewer, ventures upon a house for himself; where, as John's business increased, his wife began to dress, and having a tolerable good face, and a clear skin, soon proved

proved more attractive than their ale. As madam grew profitably handsome, John became unsufferably jealous ; but was in a great measure, obliged to conceal his indignation, as she was the better horse. So it seems agreed on all hands, that young Jack Joults is a composition of an alehouse-keeper, a wh—, and a gentleman of the inns of court. The gentleman thought it a point of humanity to provide for his offspring ; which Susan, Jack's ambitious mother, always moved him to do, by protestations that Jack was of his own entire begetting. Accordingly, the gentlemen endeavoured to give him a liberal education, and for that purpose, sent him, as soon as convenient, to an eminent school. But Jack's natural incapacity defeated this good intention ; for he never could be brought to understand the eight parts of speech. And the utmost the care of a diligent school-master could do, (who was handsomely paid for his fatigue) was to hammer a chapter in the Bible, where there were no hard names, into Jack's understanding. Jack being then too big and too old to continue any longer at school, the gentleman-father put him clerk to an attorney, where he blundered on three or four years, and just got knowledge enough to sue out his articles.

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Upon this, Jack commences lawyer and master for himself; but finding no man so foolish as to employ him, that knew his abilities, the gentleman himself attempted to teach him one particular branch of the law, but Jack was impenetrable, and not to be rendered better. However, as we are all fond of our own progeny, and can see less imperfections in them than in others, the gentleman, who had always good interest with the great folks, got Jack into several considerable places, in which he behaves in the most ignorant, audacious, and impertinent manner; setting his own judgment above his father and benefactor. This is a genuine account of his birth, behaviour, and education. But to do Jack justice, some years ago his person was well enough; and having about that time received a considerable present from his gentleman-father, to equip him in decent apparel, Jack's fancy led him (the court being then in mourning) to a suit of black cloth and a silver-laced hat. These cloaths proved the most lucky suit Jack was ever master of; for they and his hereditary modesty occasioned Jack to joust into a ball in the city, where he was not known, and where he was instantly smitten, or pretended so to be, with my niece Molly. Jack is remarkable

markable for making short work in every thing he does ; therefore he presently took a seat near the lady, and thus addressed her, stuttering and braying——

“ Pray madam, are you a maid, wife, or widow ? ” Sir, replies she in some confusion, ’tis my misfortune to be a widow.

“ I am, says Jack, very glad of it, upon my soul, madam ; for then, ’tis my good fortune to claim you for my wife ; and by G—d, you are the only person that I ever could think deserved me for a husband. What say you, pretty widow, is it a match ? Have you got money ? For the jewel of your person will not altogether tempt me, without ’tis set in gold.”

Sir, says she in the utmost surprize, I don’t want to tempt, or to be tempted. If you are a tempter, I beg you will depart to your proper region, and leave me : but in this public place I believe I am in no great danger, or I should take you for something else, rather than a gallant, by enquiring after my money. Pshaw, d—n it, ridiculous, madam, says Jack, you don’t know, you cannot tell. Lord Je—s, why I love to speak my mind at once, and now you take it amiss : you expect me to stand shilly shally, which, as a widow, you know better than to think I will. Why, pray, where is the offence

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in asking after your fortune? To shew you I have no ill intent upon you or your money, I must let you know that my name is John Joults, Esq; only son and heir of John Joults, senior, Esq; who in his life-time, and after his death, was my father; *senior* is latin for father. I think proper to let you know thus much, madam, that you may not take me for a cheat in any thing. And so, madam, my said father being deceased, that is to say, dead, for and during the term of three years next before this present conversation, I am in actual possession of all the rents, issues and profits, belonging and appertaining to Joults's manor, together with certain lands, lying and being in Hampshire (commonly called the county of Southampton) amounting in the whole to 2500 l. *per annum*. *Per annum*, madam, is a technical term, and allowed to be used by the late act, when the law was reduced to English. *Reduced* I call it, madam, for I have such an aversion to English, that I seldom speak it, except among ladies; but nobody can say that I ever write any. No, madam, latin, latin, the Roman language for Jack Joults. My father, madam, was of my opinion, and never looked in an English book in his life. By profession, madam, I am a lawyer,
and

and out of charity to two or three young fellows, whom I formerly took clerks to me, I continue my business. For really 'tis charity to provide for such wretches as creep into the world without fortunes. In short, my life at present is attended with great fatigue; besides holding several places which the government will not let me resign, because no-body can execute them but myself. But I shall let the government know, when any one of my clerks is capable, that I owe as much regard to my own constitution, as I do to theirs. And if they are not contented with one brought up under me, to do their business, I must beg the favour of the government to do it themselves. So, madam, having given you a short account of who I am, what I am, and whence I am descended, I hope you will not think me unworthy your favour; and beg I may have leave to wait on you home, where I expect you'll be as candid to me as I have been to you, and let me know what besides your beauty you have to recommend you. I cannot expect your fortune should equal mine; however, the violence of my passion will make me overlook a great deal."

Molly paused awhile, but thing the possession and enjoyment of 2500 l. *per annum*,
added

added to her own 300 l. a year, would be some atonement for marrying a fool, she told Jack, if he did not think the trouble too great, he might see her safe home. He did so; and in a very short time afterwards, Jack being satisfied that she had 300 l. a year, besides her own fortune, soon got persons to carry on the fraud, and vouch what he had said touching his estate, family, and business, to be fact. The conspiracy took effect, and they were married. Two days had not passed, before the poor injured girl learned, that Jack's father was a parish boy, and his mother a scullion. That he had no estate, and all he possessed was his impudence, and some places, which he had not capacity to execute: so that there wants nothing but his dying speech to conclude his history; for his wife has been dead some time, and left two children behind her.—Then, seeing that I was a little discomposed by this relation of my sister's misfortunes, Sir Thomas changed the subject, and after chatting a little longer with us, took his leave, and went in search of the duke and Eraustus. It is impossible to relate every thing that was said: besides, a great deal of spirit is lost in the relation, unless the very air and actions of the speakers could be represented,

presented, which too generally makes the whole of such narratives. I have been as particular as I could, insisting upon little circumstances, that you might see the good company I was describing. Now you must know, I think this is conversation, when persons of distinction, talking only of common occurrences, do it in the manner I have endeavoured to relate. Be so good as not to think, when I speak so much of myself, that I personate any other character than that of an historian. So that all the fine speeches made to me, are not what I think my due, but I only put them down because they are said to me. A message I just now received, acquaints me, that the clergyman who is minister of our parish, and his lady are in town, and intend to pay me a visit at my lodgings this afternoon. They are the best neighbours we have. He is a gentleman of great learning, good breeding, and piety, and has been married about a year. His wife had 6000*l.* to her fortune.—But I must leave all further description till my next, because I must go and prepare for their reception; and am

Yours, most sincerely,

SOPHRONIA.

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LETTER

LETTER VI.

• **M**Y company is just gone, and I am in my dressing-room, in order to continue my story, so that you will receive two letters from me this post. Aspasia (for that is the name of the lady who visited me this afternoon) is a very fine woman, and is neice to my lady Bel-lair, who I mentioned formerly. Her husband, whom I shall call Eugenio, saw her at Bath, and they soon clapt up a match. He is of a good family, but had only 1000 l. to his fortune. Erastus and he were of the same college, and he gave him the living, because he said, he would have a gentleman that would make him a companion, I often laughed with him and desired Eugenio to get him a lady, that I might not be without a companion any more than my husband. He laid out a good deal of money upon his parsonage-house, as soon as he was sure of succeeding with Aspasia, because he said he would not have her too much mortified in being a parson's wife. He has so much of my dear's taste, as to delight in seeing his wife well drest, and insisted upon her putting on all her finery, in order (as he was

was pleased to express himself) to do honour to her patroness. When the tea came in, I told her, there were few ladies of her acquaintance and mine that kept so little company as we did. True, madam, she replied, I do not envy them their multitudes. The country itself is no solitude to me; and since I have the happiness to be placed so near you, I have the greatest reason to be delighted with it. I returned her my compliments, but presumed she could not but be sensible of a prodigious alteration; she that had seen so much of the beau-monde, was so young (for she was not more than three and twenty) and so turned for conversation among people of the best rank, must certainly look upon the country as a place of banishment. She said she had seen so much of it, that she was just qualified for a country gentleman's wife. Not, said she, that I think every body can relish or become a retirement. But having seen enough of the gay part of the world, I was determined to leave it the first opportunity, and meeting Eugenio at Bath, I ran away with him. For I sometimes thought with myself, that I hoped to live till I was forty: and a fool at that age, is very conspicuously so. To go on in the way I did, of paying trifling

visits to trifling acquaintance; to hear no other talk but of dress, play, or operas, this would not do; I could not reflect upon them afterwards with pleasure, and as I hoped to live to be old, I knew I must grow ugly of course. I therefore had some regard to the furniture of my mind, which would be then my only satisfaction; and in order to it, was determined to make the first man of sense and honour who asked me the question, master of my person and fortune. I was so happy as to make a right choice, and am fixed, I hope, for a long life. Erastus and I both applauded her resolution, and were of opinion, that learning and virtue were the prime qualifications in a husband. Oh, says she, of all things, an illiterate man is *my* aversion, and as to a man void of principle, I should quickly experience I should be *his*. “So then, my dear, said Eugenio, my preventing your marrying my lord Ramble, instead of spoiling, mended your fortune: you know there was a coach and six, with as many powdered footmen to attend you in all your motions.” Yes, my dear, she returned, but you have not described all his lordship’s equipage, that is, as many mistresses, which have already broke one wife’s heart and his own constitution, and
I

I doubt in a few years his estate must follow, if it be not upon its travels already. She added, there was but one thing wanting to her happiness, and that was to know where her dear sister was, whom she loved as she did her own life. She is two years younger than myself, and disappeared about two years ago, and after all the enquiry imaginable, we could never hear whether she is dead or living. Eugenio takes care of her fortune, which is 6000*l.* for Sophia, before she went, left a letter of attorney to impower him within six months (if we did not hear from her) to manage it entirely. We sent to the Bank very often. Nobody has come for any cash, interest or principal, since that six months; so that we have great reason to fear she is dead. For otherwise, as she cannot live upon air, she or somebody for her, would have drawn upon the bank for some money. "It was a love-affair of a particular nature, whispered Eugenio to Erastus, which when we know what is become of poor Sophia, we shall discover to the world, till when it will not be proper." This prevented our enquiring any further. They staid the evening with us, as is always our custom. After supper we chatted till eleven, and then Aspasia's coach

waiting for her she took her leave. I hope to be able to return her visit next week, at her own house in the country. I returned to the dutchess's the next morning, and as the houses did not sit that day, we had the pleasure of spending it with the most amiable of men, who expressed the utmost satisfaction in our company. Nothing remarkable passed at dinner. Sir Thomas proposed to go home, but the duke told him, as we were friends and neighbours, he hoped we would not think of parting, but make it up a week at least. The good knight returned frankly, "My lord, I have no objection, if your grace will do the same by me; we will keep Erastus and his lady a little longer in town, and I will not stand with you for a trifle, For, continued he, I am clearly of opinion, that about an hour before friends part from each other, the thoughts of the coach's waiting, or any preparation to be gone, damps the good humour of the company, and spoils a great deal of conversation, which would otherwise be pleasant enough." His grace came into the proposal, and it had been to no purpose for Erastus and me to have opposed the agreement. But, says the duke, though I am never so happy as when in this company, yet it seems

seems a little unreasonable to coop the ladies up in the manner they have been these three days, so that it would be proper to devise some entertainment for them, and not always to have them housed.

Right, said Sir Thomas, we must not spoil a good proverb, "Men and dogs, &c." I do not think it proper that we should be cooped up any more than they: therefore I make a motion, that we all go to the masquerade next Tuesday. Mrs. Mary came in at that instant, and told the dutchess, lady Softly and her two daughters had been to wait upon her grace, but the porter very stiffly denied her being at home. He did very well, said the dutchess, for at present we do not mightily want their company; pray how long have they been gone? answer was made, about five minutes; but they talked of coming again to-morrow, to prevail with your grace to be of their party at the play-house next Tuesday night. 'Tis very lucky, said the dutchess, they sent her away, for she is the most impertinent creature alive, and her daughters are true copies of their mamma. But what say you, my lord? are you for the play or the masquerade, next Tuesday? Your grace should have asked the ladies, says Sir Thomas, but I will undertake

to give you their answer,—“For both.” The duke said, he referred this, as he would every other matter of consequence, to their decision, and begged they would determine it. For my part, replied Amanda, I never was at but one masquerade in my life, and that was purely in compliance with Sir Thomas: I thought it the most tasteless, wretched entertainment in the world. That might be, my dear, said the knight, because your husband was of the party. Not all the while, my dear, returned Amanda; for you know, you made so free with the champaign, that you put me into the wrong chair, and went home yourself with lady Betty Racket. “So, so, said the dutchess, fine doings indeed.” Yes, replied Sir Thomas, the lady was about five and fifty; gay, amorous, and juvenile—but to have entertained her to her liking, would have required two bottles more of champaign at least. “Pray, said I, Sir Thomas, are those kind of mistakes usual at masquerades?” how can it be otherwise, madam, replied he, when one half of the company goes thither purely to mistake the other half? if you have a curiosity to go, you will soon meet with a pretended acquaintance, that, take my word for it, will

will tell you a great many things you will stand no chance of hearing any where else. There is my barber in Leicester-fields never misses a masquerade; has a very pretty manner of conversing, and I am told, passes among the ladies for a man of the first quality at those midnight assemblies. Nay, said I, if that be the case, you have spoiled my curiosity; I am for seeing characters properly represented, so I vote that we go to the play. Pray what is it? "The Provoked Husband, says Erastus, one of the best comedies in ours, or perhaps any other language." I am entirely of your opinion, cried the duke, and wonder extremely that our great poet should have taken so much pains to stigmatize the author, as a dunce and a blockhead, when 'tis certain, the man that could write that play, must have had a great deal, both of invention and judgment. "Aye, said the knight, a devilish deal more than the author or authors of the Three Hours after Marriage; at least, as to dramatic performances." Well, my dear, said I to Erastus, when we have done with the journey to London, it will be time to resume the thoughts of a journey into the country. "Oh, the country, cried the dutchess, of all things is to me the most delightful!

can wear what we please, do as we please, and shall have no intermeddling creatures to give us any disturbance." Since you say so, madam, replied the duke, I give you my word, that as soon as the parliament rises, which will be in a fortnight, we will go down into the country, and leave this sink of sin and sea-coal to those that have no relish for any other scene. Till I was a duke, I thought the country a paradise, and do not doubt but I shall find it so again. That is the place, I am persuaded, for me to grow wise, and rich, and good. Erastus said, there was no occasion for his grace to expect to grow rich; as 18,000 l. a year ought to have no encrease. That is true, rejoined the duke, but if there should be a large debt upon it, the value of it will be somewhat lessened. My lord, says Erastus, I believe it is in my power to serve you; what does your grace call a large debt? "Twenty thousand pound, answered the duke, is a large debt." It is so, says Erastus; but if I pay it off for you in a year and half, and in another year and half put the like sum into your pocket—the duke interrupted him, "It is impossible even to pay it off in ten years time." Erastus then told his grace, that as he had a great deal of leisure, he had amused himself often with composing

composing estimates of expences, from 20,000l. a year, to 200 l. taking in the account of a family. "My way is, to compute my own, which I have done to the greatest exactness. I allow enough, but there is no waste, nothing supernumerary. This scheme I have pursued steadily, and out of 500l. a year, the whole of my income, I have saved near a thousand pound. Now, I allow a like proportion to a larger fortune. That is, if an estate is twenty times more, the expences are twenty times as much, and my scheme has been of service in several instances." Ay, says Sir Thomas, it saved my estate for me, I am sure. Look ye, my lord, follow his rules, and I will engage he shall make good every syllable he proposes. Erastus proceeded, your grace must go into the country, my scheme will not take in town. "My dear friend, says the duke, I give myself entirely up to your direction; do not let me know all, only if you please, give me a rough sketch in three or four words what your scheme is." Why then, my lord, if you would be free of your debt, and have 20,000l. in your pocket in three years time, I must cut off two thirds of your supernumerary attendants. You shall be allowed ten men, and as many women servants,

vants, if you think you want them. Why, says the duke, I cannot tell how many I have at present, or how many I shall want, unless I could see my steward's papers. "There lies the point, returned Erastus, I must demolish that same steward, who is more than your twenty servants, put them all together. You shall be your own steward, my lord, and with very little assistance, you shall see every estate you have, once a year. Sure it must be as entertaining to a nobleman to visit a fine manor, and estates lying round it, from one to five hundred a year, nay even the smallest parcel of land that lies within a hedge, as to go to any diversion in England. In short, you shall keep two coaches and six, with a table, dress, and furniture suitable to your quality, and all this shall be done for 4000l. a year; with the rest we will pay your debts, and get the money I speak of." If this could be done, said the duke—None of your ifs, cried Sir Thomas; I do not pretend to say your grace must live as privately as I do. "What do you mean, said the duke, I am sure I should never desire to live better." Why then, replied the knight, I give you my word I do not spend quite 2000l. a year; I will shew you my account. I have followed Erastus's plan, and have got 10,000l. in
my

pocket, or shall have, if I can get it out of Mr. Joul's hands. Of that, Sir Thomas, said Erastus, I have taken care; the mortgage is transferred, and your money placed out upon good security. Nay then, added the duke, this is demonstration, my dear, says he to the dutchess, I was in a fair way to ruin soul, body, and estate, but now I am in hopes I shall save all three. We will not stay for the parliament's rising, but set out to-morrow if you please; for I am upon thorns till I have made a beginning to do what Erastus proposes. "Nay, my lord, said Amanda, we cannot possibly go till after the play, because you know we have settled that point, and it is part of Erastus's scheme to mingle pleasure and business." Erastus went on; if your grace will comply with one thing, (and unless you do, you must pardon me if I do not shew you the whole of my scheme) which is, to let me put fifty guineas down towards this expedition; Sophronia and I will see every farm you have this summer, settle the leases of your tenants, order the repairs, survey your timber, cut down what will take harm by standing, and, perhaps, we shall clear you in a shorter time than we proposed. The jaunt will be extremely pleasant, we shall be mostly the same company, especially at dinner

dinner and supper, and I shall be very proud to give your grace any demonstration of my being sincerely attached to your interest. Sir Thomas looking upon Amanda, said, my dear, we have nothing else to do, and if you please, we will take a tour along with them. She told him it was a most agreeable proposal to her, and desired to make one amongst us, upon the same terms with Eraustus. The duke was going to object; but Sir Thomas told him, Eraustus was Amanda's tutor, and she dared not do any thing but what he approved, therefore it would be in vain to dispute it. In two or three months time, Eraustus insisted, we could do all, and see a considerable part of England besides, as the duke had some estates that lay a good distance from the rest. —

I promised you, my dear friend, two letters this post, but must beg you will accept of this, which I did not intend should have been above half as long when I sat down to write. Besides, now I recollect, far from receiving two letters at a time from you, 'tis enough if you can prevail with yourself to write to me once in six weeks.

I am yours, &c.

SOPHRONIA.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

IT was late before the coffee came in, when the dutchess's waited on us again; and though it was not observed by the gentlemen, we could perceive by her dress, she was a great favourite of her lady's. At supper, we were in the same good humour as we had been all the day. The duke was in high spirits, and gave us a short history of his life. He told us, that being in no expectation of his title, he studied hard at the university, designing to be preferred in the church. But his elder brother dying, spoiled his being a dean or a bishop, and the whetting his title had like to have cost him his life; so that within a month after he married, he was forced to go to Aix la Chapelle for his health, where he staid six months. At his return, the same company engaged him again in the same excesses, which by degrees, said he, estranged me from my wife, and the bottle, night after night, had like to have killed me. Company, villainous company (as Falstaff says) hurried me into all kinds of extravagance; but amongst the ladies, sure no fellow was ever more unlucky, so that my vir-
tue

tue has been entirely owing to accident. "Really my lord, said I, you determined to have a great deal of business upon your hands; but how long may your grace have been a follower of the ladies?" Madam, replied he, about eight or ten months; ever since we parted beds. The dutchess who sat very attentive, striking her fist very earnestly upon the table, cried, "Ay, that parting of beds is a terrible thing indeed!" The duke smiled, and went on with his history. His amours he said, always ended in disappointments. One lady he visited, and going up to her chamber, saw her footman come from the door with his cloaths all unbuttoned. At another's, he mistook the day of appointment, as her billet was so scrawled he could not tell whether it was Tuesday or Thursday he was to meet her. So that ruined him there. A third time, as he waited upon a lady home, just as he got her out of her chair he missed his watch, which cost him an hundred guineas. She saw me out of humour, and asked what I ailed? I told her my loss, withal, that I had it the moment before she came out of her chair; and expressed myself a little dubiously, as if she might have a mind to put me into a fluster about it. This enraged her so much, that she called me
a pitiful

a pitiful scoundrel. She supposed I was some valet, that might presume to cut a figure with my master's watch, that I was carrying to mend; though it was a good caution, she said, clapping her hands in her pockets, and she did not know but I might make as free with her's. Then ordered two fellows to turn me out of doors. I was consumedly vexed to be thus choused, and do really believe the jade picked my pocket, for I lost a purse with eighty guineas in it besides. But the last affair of this sort was about a fortnight since. I was at a visit, where a dance was proposed, and had for my partner a very fine woman in black velvet. I made an appointment to wait upon this same lady the next night, without any Attendants. I was received by her in a civil, distant sort of a way; but just as I was going to attack her in the tender stile, the maid came running in, and told her there was company coming up stairs. She begged of me to save her honour, and committed me to her maid, who carried me into the next room, a bed-chamber, where stood a large old-fashioned chest. She desired I would hide myself there. I got in, but it was not long enough by half a yard, so I was forced to lie all on a heap. The unmerciful jade clapped

clapped down the lid, turned the key, and there lay Strephon with his neck almost broke. The dutchess with great simplicity cried, ah poor dear soul! He went on; it was well the chest was an old one, for there was a hole at one corner, where I could get a little air, or I had certainly been stifled. I lay in this manner till I thought the lady's honour was pretty safe; at last, I was forced to heave up my back to try if the lid could be opened, but in struggling I threw down the chest on one side, which made a noise as if the house had been falling. The maid came running in, and very lucky it was, that it did not fall with the lock towards the floor, for I might have lain till this time. She opened the chest, and out I got, but terribly bruised, with my neck awry, and the skin rubbed off my shins and elbows. The wench said, upon hearing a great noise in the next room, her lady and company ran away in a fright, fearing that rogues were breaking into the house; but hoped I would not be discouraged, her mistress would not fail to be at home to-morrow night. I said, it was very well, and gathering up my sword and cane, slunk away like a dog that had lost his tail. My wife seeing me very much out of order the next day, enquired particularly

larly what was the matter? I told her it was a cold I got by sitting between two doors. Then a surgeon was sent for, and cupping (which to me is as bad as the old chest) was proposed, which I was forced to submit to. Thus ended the last business of this kind that ever I had; it has cost me two or three hundred pound in losses of one kind or other, and I have had enough of it. After we had all done laughing, Sir Thomas rang the bell for his servant, and ordered him to bring up a little trunk that was in the parlour next the street. When it was brought, well, my lord, says he, this was your last intrigue, you assure the company. The very last, replied the duke: "Then, returned the knight, (opening the trunk) in the first place, there is your watch and its furniture, and here is your purse with eighty guineas in it, and I wish I could help you to the rest." This surprized us all, but he went on and told us, the last duke [his grace's brother] committed you to my care: "You see, said he, what I am brought to by my irregularities. My brother is at present a sober man; if my title and estate, which he will shortly possess, do not spoil him, he may be of great service to his friends and country." Upon yours, therefore, and her grace's
account,

account, we had a committee that sat upon you every week; knew all your motions, and counterplotted them, and picked your pocket as often as we could. Your very tradesmen were employed to watch you. The man you saw come down stairs from one of your mistresses; was dressed in a livery, and placed there by my direction, and is the very same who brought in the trunk but this minute. The affair of the chest is no secret to Amanda and me; for we two and the lady of the house set it there on purpose. There was a person of fashion in the company where you danced, whom I believed you would take particular notice of, and I was not deceived. She told us you had appointed to be with her the next night, and my wife and I were the visitors who put you into such a fright, and made you overturn the chest. If you had had the least curiosity, you might have heard us laugh. The lady is a woman of the strictest honour, no other person than my lady Well-don, I assure you. We did not think proper to give my lady dutchess any suspicion about you, for fear of making her uneasy, but were resolved we would break your heart if you did not give over. The duke laughed, and said, they had like to have broke his neck. I wondered indeed,

continued

continued he, that Sir Thomas was so constantly with me every morning before I was out of bed. "My pretence, you know, said the knight, was parliament business, to get you to attend the house; but the real business was to see that you stay at your own house. And these, my lord, are our underparts, which I think *we* did to perfection. There is no need to employ my familiars any further in these matters, so I commit you to the dutchess as your guardian angel." His grace made the knight his most sincere acknowledgments, and said, he was now more sensible than ever of the importance and reality of virtue, since it had engaged so many persons of distinction to rescue him from vice. He talked very long in this strain, to the great satisfaction of us all, who were convinced that he spoke his real sentiments.

Whilst he was going on, I pointed to Amanda, who was fallen fast asleep. Sir Thomas turned his head, and giving her a gentle shake, my dear child, says he, you should not sleep in sermon-time. It was an admirable discourse, upon this text, "You must not cuckold your husband." Amanda rubbing her eyes, and hardly awake, cried, "No more I will, Sir Thomas, till next Tuesday." This set us all
a laugh-

SOPHRONIA; Or,

a laughing very heartily. The poor lady looked frightened, and enquired what was the matter; but not a soul would tell her and only repeated her answer—"No more I will, Sir Thomas, till next Tuesday." At last, the dutchess told her what her spouse had said, to which she had given that answer. This made her laugh as much as the rest: She said, she was dreaming of the masquerade. "No masquerade, wife, said the knight, since you intend to play me such a trick there. But since you are so fair as to declare your design beforehand, the least thing I can do, is to put you in good humour before next Tuesday, to make you alter your mind." Then addressing himself to the duke, said, "my lord, I have heard you praise your Arrack; be so good as to let us have a sneaker, that the ladies may not go to bed with dry lips." Which was presently brought in. We sate over it till two, as happy and chearful as could be wished, and then went to bed. We staid the remainder of the week with the duke, and another with Sir Thomas, to our infinite satisfaction.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

THE time came at last for this agreeable set of friends to part. For though we had promised to wait upon the duke and dutchess in their progress to their estates, yet it would be full a month before travelling would be pleasant. Erasmus said, he would make a little trip into the country, to settle his own affairs, that he might meet with no hindrance in his design of serving the duke in the manner he proposed. The morning we were to come away, as we were at breakfast, Sir Thomas was called out; but soon returned with a letter in his hand, and skipping as he came into the room, cried, the Irish conjurer is dead! Here is a special messenger has just brought me word, that he was decently run through the lungs for attempting to make a cuckold of a baronet;—"at a masquerade, upon a Tuesday, I suppose," said the duke—Amanda smiled, and her spouse went on; "The lady was a woman of honour, and this rascal had bespattered her, because she would not admit of his addresses. Her husband heard of it and fought him; he absconds at present, but my lord duke, he

he is an acquaintance of yours, and I believe you may do him service. It seems my niece Betty had settled all in trustees hands, but 1000l. which honest MacGregory made free with, and spent in two years time; besides the interest of the other, which was to be paid him for his life. Here are the securities, by which Sophronia is entitled to a moiety of what is left." Erastus said, smiling, my dear, pray let us get away as fast as we can, for indeed we grow too rich: I believe the coach is ready. But in short, we could not get away till two days after; for it was necessary to fix the time peremptorily. At last it came. The duke and dutchess embraced us very tenderly; Sir Thomas and Amanda redoubled their Caresses, and all four waited on us to our coach. A great many tears were shed at parting, when we repeated our resolution to be with them again in a month's time, to visit the duke's estate. We drove leisurely, for our business was to enjoy the journey, which was about sixty miles to our own little country-seat. We were two days and an half, because the roads were yet but indifferent. Erastus said, it was slow travelling, but as I was with him, there was no occasion to make more haste, I told him, he seemed to imply, his wife was
a clog

a clog that retarded the quickness of his motions. When we got home, we settled all our affairs, looked over our estate, and set about making some new additions to our house, offices, and furniture; and in this manner we have spent a month, without receiving any summons from the duke, but the weather being bad, that may be the reason.

Three days after we came hither, Aspasia made me another visit. I am just come from her house. She is a most excellent woman, and extremely happy in her husband. *So might you be, my dear Amoret, if you pleased; for it is surprizing a woman of your sense should study such an unamiable behaviour as you do, even by your own account. You tell me, your husband spends most of his evenings in the profoundest silence, when he and you are alone. I know he can talk, but you will not give him an opportunity. You put him out of humour, by always being so yourself; and if, as they say, mirth is catching, I am sure fullness is of a more contagious nature. The short abrupt answers you give him whenever he speaks to you; the perpetual uneasiness you shew at being *moaped up* in the country, as you express yourself, though you know he is fond of being there, and it

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has

*No thing pleases a man more than
mildness of temper and when he speaks
to let him have it own way*

has cost him a very large sum to fit up his seat; your obscure hints, that mean nothing, only thus much, that you are displeased, must naturally tend to make him sullen and morose. As he is so much at home, you may be sure of one thing, that he is not spending his fortune. But prithee, my dear, confess the truth fairly in your next. Is not that delight you take in giving pain, the real source of this unaccountable conduct? I fear it is. At eighteen or nineteen such coquetry is well enough, but in a married woman all those airs are abominable. Try for once to oblige him in his little humours, and do not pretend to be witty upon his taste in any thing he desires of you. Smile upon him when he speaks to you. Treat him with good manners, and as if you did not think him either a fool or a knave; for you must be satisfied, the world is not of your opinion of his being one or the other. Let him see you can behave to him, as he has observed other ladies do to their husbands; and my life for yours, you will find a very happy change. By the account I have given you of the friends I have been lately with, you may perceive, an obliging behaviour is the foundation of that entire good understanding between them. Erastus has often told me,

me, that had I disobliged or crossed him at the first, he should have been very unhappy, but he should not have been unhappy alone. There is not any thing more displeasing to a man of sense, than to see his wife make no difference between matters of the greatest moment, and those of no moment at all. I have heard a good lady in the same tone of voice, and with equal concern, enquire after her husband's health, and how a spot came upon the floor. The consequence was natural, that her husband thought a spot upon the floor affected her as much as his own health. These are improprieties, which an observing man (and men of reading, my lord Halifax tells us, are great observers) must condemn; and if they are frequent, will lessen his affection. Consider that you are in your husband's house; the family is his, and it is your care and interest that he may be easy in it. If he is not, it is a thousand to one but you drive him to the bottle, which has confounded many better estates than yours. When you come down in a morning, resolve with yourself to let his meals be chearful; do not spend all the time in seeking occasions to quarrel. I have seen a knife and fork displease you, and put you out of temper a considerable time. Then, the spilling a glass of wine;

a slight mistake of a footman in not bringing you the thing you wanted, but another; and all the while your eyes ready charged to fly at your spouse, if he has any way shewn his dislike of such a behaviour; then, the tarts were burnt up as dry as a chip—nobody in the world had such servants,—all the wretches, all the drabbs in the country fell to your share;—when you have called for wine, you have industriously taken care not to drink your husband's health: ~~Is~~ Is there that man upon earth, that can be in good humour in such circumstances? If there is, he must be made of different materials from the rest of the species. Prythee lay aside all airs, all affectation of superiority, which, generally speaking, is the bane of all you great beauties, or you who think yourselves so. For it is an adjudged case, that through their own abominable ill-carriage to their dears, they never fail of being hated by them twelve hours of the four and twenty. You will have old-age creep upon you before you know what you are doing; and will have only the malignant pleasure to reflect, that you have spent your life in a perpetual struggle with the man whom you engaged to obey, besides the mortification to see your acquaintance happy and satisfied in the married state,

whilst

*She must be a god to have such
servants, I am sure*

LETTERS to the LADIES. 77

whilst you pine away, and are dying while you live; though, if I may be allowed so serious an expression, not very fit either to live or die. Forgive my freedom; but our early knowledge of each other, and the sincere esteem I have for you, are the occasion of my using you with so little ceremony. And I would always have you do the like when you write to

Yours,

Very good advice

{ SOPHRONIA.



LETTER IX.

I ASK pardon for being so long before I answered your last. Though you justly complain of six months silence, yet what I have already said to you by way of advice, and given you demonstration what effect an obliging temper has had in the instances of four married couple, (in reconciling one of them, and keeping the others in such a degree of mutual good understanding, as to need no reconciliation) I thought might be sufficient entertainment to you, even during a longer

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abatement of our correspondence. I had conceived hopes, you would by this time have reduced our history to practice, and been yourself the dutchess, the Amanda, and the Aspasia you have heard so much of. But whether you are perfectly reformed by example, as I sincerely wish; I have that value for you, that I will not forbear writing to you, and the contents of this will be my apology for doing it thus late. Three weeks ago, Eraustus made an entertainment upon our wedding day, and invited several of the gentlemen and ladies in the neighbourhood; but it so happened, that we were disappointed of the pleasure of seeing any of them, except Eugenio and his lady, who do us the signal favour of being entirely fond of us both, and very loth to miss any opportunity to be with us. I must tell you, that we have introduced a new method of visiting, which is this: the gentlemen observed, that upon invitations to dinner, the company always make it very late before they come; now they say very truly, that it is the conversation, not the entertainment, that they visit for. So we are always with one another two or three hours before dinner comes upon the table. The gentlemen are turning over their books, and Aspasia and I very often with them

them in Erastus's study, or diverting ourselves in the garden; and generally begin a conversation, which is only continued at dinner, and lasts all the time we are together. That day, Aspasia was with me a little after ten. We had not been walking above half an hour by my watch, before the footman came and told us, there was a coach and six coming up to the gate. We went in to receive the company, but Aspasia throwing up the sash, said, it had nobody in it. Erastus went down the court-yard to know what was the meaning of its being empty, and enquired of the servants whether the company had not alighted, and were coming on foot. The coachman said, there came nobody in the coach; he was hired to drive it hither, and being asked, he said he did not know whom it belonged to. As Erastus was in this suspense about it, he discovered another coach and six coming a full trot, and a chariot at a distance. Immediately we began to suspect the duke and dutchess were in one of them, though I had received a letter from her grace, wherein she dispaired of seeing me till winter; and accordingly, I left Aspasia and went to Erastus. As soon as the other vehicles came up, the first moved off; but the coachman not knowing whose it was, had

80 SOPHRONIA; Or,

no orders to take off his horses. What I suspected proved true, for the duke and dutchess, Sir Thomas and Amanda, were in the second coach. Her grace, as soon as she alighted, ran to me with open arms, and cried, dear Sophronia, I am transported to see you. The duke embraced Eraustus, till the good Sir Thomas cried out, "Pray my lord, let Eraustus kiss my wife, whilst I kiss his." The meeting so many of our best friends was the greatest pleasure imaginable. But upon enquiring who were in the chariot, let them speak for themselves, said the dutchess. So after embracing one another again, we went in. Sir Thomas said, Amanda and he resolved to come and keep their wedding-day with us, but says he, we shall eat you up, being so many. I introduced Eugenio and his lady to them all, who received them with the highest good-breeding. I found that both of them were no strangers to the duke and dutchess. By this time the chariot had set down its contents, which proved to be the dutchess's woman and Amanda's. Mrs. Mary was in a blue damask night-gown, Mrs. Betty in a striped lutestring. As they were giving orders about their ladies portmanteaus, Aspasia discovered her mistake; for she thought they were two ladies come to pay us a visit

visit along with the rest of the company. When they came up the court-yard, upon Amanda's woman's asking what was a clock, Mrs. Mary said, she had packed up her watch in the trunk, but believed it was turned of eleven. Aspasia's curiosity was raised to take more notice of this young creature, and whilst we were otherwise engaged, she sidled up to the door, that she might have a full view of her, as she went past the room to the other servants. But in less than a minute, Aspasia ran to her and cried, "my dear Sophia, have I found you at last? Do my arms hold my dear sister? Where have you concealed yourself from the enquiry of all your friends? It was cruel, Sophia, to throw us into such despair about you." All this while she held her close, and almost stifled her with kisses; then cried aloud to Eugenio, "my dear, here is my sister; here is Sophia!" Eugenio and all the company hastened to her. The duke said, this was unkind in you, madam, not not to let us know who you were; and if you have met with any behaviour not suitable to your birth and fortune, young lady, you must blame yourself. Then taking her hand, his grace brought her into the room, where we all saluted her, and made a thousand apologies for any

mistakes occasioned by our ignorance. Sophia returned our civilities in a most engaging manner, and said, as there was a cloud over her fortunes, she thought proper to throw the like over her condition; though, she added, to be used so handsomely by the excellent lady dutchess, could not deserve that term; for she knew no difference while she was in his grace's family between his house and her own. She said, she did not design the discovery should have been made so soon, though she would have let us know her history in a day or two: It was the most agreeable surprize to find her sister in this place, when she did not know where Eugenio was preferred: and, after returning our compliments, desired she might retire to dress, which she thought she could yet do before dinner. Yes, my dear, says the dutchess, and I am resolved I will help you. So after a dish of chocolate was served round, her grace and I took Sophia into my dressing-room. It was a great contest this business of dressing. The dutchess told her, she should be very angry if she refused her assistance; she was forced to comply, so we left Aspasia to entertain the good company below. I told Sophia, the last suit I saw her in at the dutchess's, became her extremely.

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She said, the cloaths were made up for a particular occasion, which as she had met with a disappointment, she was unwilling should tarnish for want of wearing, and that her grace commanded her to appear in whatever she herself liked; for she had the goodness to use me more like a sister than a servant. “My dear, replied the dutchess, I am sorry that by concealing yourself, you met with any other treatment than is strictly your due.” As we were desiring to know the reason of this concealment, a servant came up and told us, the coach and six which first drove up to the gate, was gone, and nobody knew whither. I was amazed; and the dutchess said, what pity it was nobody stopt or went after it: the coachman was an absolute stranger, whom we hired to come along with it. What, said I, madam, does it not belong to Sir Thomas? No indeed, said her grace, it does not; but be easy, you will certainly hear of it in an hour or two, if you send after it. I rang the bell, to dispatch one of them upon this errand, but it seems, none of the servants saw it go away; and just below our house there were three or four roads crossing one another, so that the search would be very troublesome, and as we had such a great deal of company, I could not send more
of

of my own people, nor borrow any of theirs for this purpose. As Sophia was dressing herself, she dropped a picture out of her bosom, which she took up and fixed to the chain of her watch. We saw it was the portrait of a young gentleman, who she said was a relation of her's. "You mean, my dear, said the dutchess, it is one, who is to be a relation of yours." We both looked at it, but could not recollect the face. She said, she would not detain us any longer, but after dinner we should know her history. Then we all went down and joined the company. The sisters again renewed their embraces, and the duke told us, he had something of importance he had been big with ever since he came, and could contain it no longer. He then said, that a fortnight after we left the town, he heard that Sir Edward Manly (Erastus's brother) was going to marry or die in Shropshire, and perhaps both. That, having formerly been acquainted with him, he was determined to know the truth of it himself. So he and the dutchess, without communicating his design to any one person besides, went down to Shrewsbury, where he found Sir Edward extremely ill, but just upon the point of matrimony. He was received by him in a very polite manner.

manner. "I told him, continued his grace, he could not but be sensible of his own ill state of health, and that I thought it would be more prudent to defer his marriage a fortnight at least; though I feared this was a precipitate resolution, which perhaps a misunderstanding between Erastus and him might occasion." He answered, his brother had no reason to think his advice was to be asked, if he thought of altering his condition: I have cut off the entail, sold the estate, paid my debts, and have eighteen or twenty thousand pounds left, which I want a purchase for; being convinced I did wrong to part with the family seat, and design now, if I live, to have children of my own to inherit it. I told him he was perfectly right; a good wife was the best friend, and the only means to make a man happy; but where shall we find her? Oh, he replied, the lady he was going to be happy with the very next day, had all that a man could expect or wish from a wife. "Why, are you to be married to-morrow?" Yes; my dear angel cannot rest till we are made entirely one; and therefore at her request, to-morrow is the day I have pitched upon. "Pray Sir Edward, says I, give me leave to think, the lady if she loves you, at present would deny

deny herself the happiness of being your wife, till she should have a fairer prospect of not being your widow. You are fitter for your bed than marriage. Take my advice. Throw in a delay or two to gain time; if it be but a week, it may make a great alteration in your health. Pray, may I have the honour to see this lady, and talk with her about it? Where does she live? I will go to her this moment; for I will not have you lost for a little punctilio." Just as he was going to tell me, the lady came into the chamber, and seeing me there would have retired. But I told her, so fair a visiter was not to be parted with so easily; and that since she had the humanity to come and call upon my sick friend, I would not by any means deprive him of her company. She said, indeed Sir Edward was mighty ill, but she hoped he would find a great alteration to-morrow. As soon as she spoke, I knew it was the nymph whom I suspected of having stole my watch. "Ha! old acquaintance, said I to her, I protest I did not know you at first; how came you to strole down hither?" She returned very quick, she did not know me, and wondered what I meant? I told Sir Edward, this very person I once intended to have an affair with, and gave him a detail of every

every particular. She wondered at my assurance, to treat a person of her quality in that manner. "Look ye, my dear, said I, your business is done in this place, therefore I would advise you to decamp in twenty four hours. Could not you have been contented with some country squire, but must lay your snares for this worthy gentleman? who, if he doubts the truth of what he has heard, shall have Tom Mirabell, who kept you last winter, come down in a week's time to confirm it." In short, I said so much to her, that she took her leave, and told Sir Edward, she would return when such troublesome guests as I were gone from him. But, as we were informed, she left Shrewsbury that evening, for fear I should be as good as my word. Your brother returned me his most grateful acknowledgments, for having done him this singular piece of service. The narrow escape he had met with, proved too much for his spirits; but as his illness increased, I had the good fortune to bring him to reason. He was much concerned for the difference between you and him, which he owned he was the occasion of himself; and if he thought he could live a fortnight, he would desire to see you. But, upon my pressing him to make a will, he absolutely refused; said,

said, he owed nothing, and that every thing would fall to you at his death; which happened ten days after. At his own request, I took his keys, looked over his writings, and found there was upwards of 20,000*l.* left, and a coach and six. His corpse was so morbid, that his funeral would admit of no delay, so I ordered him to be interred suitable to his quality; settled his effects, put the money into safe hands, where it lies for your approbation, and because I would have the pleasure of bringing you the news myself, I took care that none of the papers should have his death inserted. We then made what haste we could to London, brought away the coach and six, acquainted Sir Thomas with what we had done, and in three days afterwards resolved to set out hither with him and his lady. We drove leisurely, that we might take you upon your wedding-day, for we lay but six miles off last night. And thus, my dear Erasmus, I have had the pleasure to do you some service in my turn."

We could not sufficiently express our gratitude to his grace, for this fresh instance of his friendship; but he told my spouse, the obligations he had received from him, besides the saving his life, were
always

always uppermost in his thoughts, and would engage his utmost services. "Now, my dear, says the dutchess, if you should hear no more of your coach, here is wherewithal to buy a new one." The whole company expressed their congratulations in abundance; and the duke added, that Erastus, by setting so excellent an example to the married world, richly deserved his estate, and had given a valuable, or rather, an invaluable consideration for it.



LETTER X.

WHILST we were talking very earnestly of these matters, we never observed Aspasia go out of the room; but upon enquiry, we were told that a message came to her, and that immediately after, she and Sophia went into the garden. As we thought the two sisters desired to be alone after so long a separation, we did not send to interrupt them. But upon receiving several advertisements from the kitchen, that the dinner, which had been put back an hour, would be spoiled, Sir Thomas begged the ladies might be called in; search was made for them

them all over the garden, but to no purpose. Just as we were going to sit down without them, the first coach and six, which went away in the manner you have heard, drove up to the gate full speed, when we perceived there was company in it. But our surprize was very great, when we saw Aspasia and her sister get out of it. Sophia, as she came in, told me with a smile, that she had an excellent faculty at recovering lost goods, and was resolved she would find my coach if possible. There it is, said she, and I wish your ladyship a great deal of health to enjoy it. I replied, there was some mystery in this affair, which I could not make out. Sir Thomas said, he wished the minister of the parish was present, that he might first say grace, and then explain the mystery. Aspasia begged we would sit down without him; and the knight offered to be chaplain. As the company were placing themselves, Aspasia refused to sit above her sister, though she was the eldest; and Sophia pulling off her gloves, discovered a wedding-ring upon her finger. Sir Thomas then insisted, that we should all salute her before we touched a bit. When we were sate down again, Aspasia said, she left part of her sister's story to be told by herself; but she had dis-

dispatched a great deal of business in a very little time, for she was just come from being married to Sir Harry Bellair. We went through the garden, continued she, into the church-yard, where Eugenio and the bridegroom waited for us. They will both be here in an hour or two, Sir Harry being gone home to our house to dress. Eugenio, the moment we had discovered my sister, ran into your coach without his hat, and drove to the sea-port, whither Sir Harry went this morning from the parsonage, to set out on his travels, despairing of finding my sister. Had he been a quarter of an hour later, he had been gone. As soon as he heard of his mistress, he made all imaginable speed back. They sent in to speak with me and Sophia: we went into the garden, and in the church-yard the lovers met, and agreed to seize that opportunity to be made one. We then got into the coach, and for amusement, took a turn of about a mile, and then drove up to the gate. Eugenio desired I would excuse his not dining with us, but they will be here time enough to drink tea. This occasioned many congratulations from the duke and dutchess to lady Bellair; who as she was married upon our wedding-day, Sir Thomas and Amanda said, it was pity we should part with her. And accordingly I told Aspasia,

she

she must resign all pretensions to her company, while Sir Harry and she staid in the parts; which, with difficulty, she consented to. The ease with which she took her younger sister's being a lady, was remarked by all the company. After dinner, I begged of Sophia to let us know her history. "Which she replied was very short; that she would not detain us with the beginning of the amour, as it had nothing romantic in it. But after the good old custom, says she, we met, looked, and liked, as we danced together at a ball at lady Bellair's. The match was proposed by Sir William, my dear's papa, to both our contents. And because his estate was small, and chiefly settled upon his lady, his brother, who was an eminent merchant, and desired to see his nephew married, and to me above any other person, as he said himself, agreed to give him 600*l*. a year at present, and the rest of his fortune at his death. I thought nothing now could hinder our happiness; but Sir William soon altered his mind, hearing of a better fortune than me, whom he recommended his son to apply to, not doubting of his success, nor his brother's kindness in promoting the interest of his family. But the young gentleman told his father, he never could do any thing

so injurious to his own honour; and that his heart was so absolutely mine, that it was too late to think of any other wife for him but Sophia. Sir William was very angry, and threatened to disinherit him if he persisted in that opinion. On the other hand, Mr. Bellair the merchant, a testy old bachelor, was so strongly bent upon his nephew's marrying me, that he swore he would not give him a farthing, if he knew he so much as thought of any other woman; and wondered what his brother meant, by tempting his son to deal so dishonourably. Whilst these two were debating the matter, which was during some months, and no accommodation likely to ensue, the young gentleman making his visits to me with the utmost secrecy; I thought the only way to reconcile the brothers, was to withdraw the object of their contention. So without acquainting any body with my design, I took coach for London, and having settled my affairs, and sent proper powers to my brother and sister, to manage my fortune for me, in case I should find it adviseable to travel; I was prevented going abroad, by being happily thrown in your grace's way. The excellence of your character, madam, says she, (addressing herself to the dutchess) soon determined

terminated me to stay in England, and if possible to be introduced into your family, in quality of your grace's woman. I thought this would be an effectual concealment, and it proved so, for you were the most indulgent mistress upon earth. By dining and supping in my own room, I kept myself from being much observed, and passing for a gentleman's daughter of three or four hundred pound fortune, made you extend all your goodness towards me. I had always good spirits, and did not doubt but that chance would declare in my favour. By my retiring, the young gentleman regained the good opinion of his father, who was in hopes that time and absence would cure his son of his passion for me; and I thought this was a sure way to try whether my lover were constant or not. Sir William died about thirteen months ago, and Sir Harry went abroad, hoping, as he told me within these two hours, to hear of me at Paris. His search was in vain, so he came home again in half a year, hunted all over England for me, and came down about a week ago to my sisters; where lamenting my unkindness, if I were living, not to write to him nor any of my friends, but rather concluding I was dead, he was this very morning setting out to make
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the tour of Italy, careless whether ever he returned or no. As soon as Eugenio discovered who I was, without speaking one word to me, or any of this good company, he ran down without his hat, whipt into lady Manly's coach and fix, and bid the fellow drive as fast as he could to the sea-port town. Sir Harry was got into the boat, ready to go on board a ship bound for Marseilles, when Eugenio hollowed after him. The boat was scarce a stone's throw off the shore; but the people seeing a clergyman without his hat, running and hollowing in that manner, ran after him shouting and making a noise, so that he was forced to cry as loud as he could bawl, "Sir Harry Bellair! Sophia is at my house! Sophia is at my house!" This made the young gentleman turn his head; and hearing him repeat it over and over, at last prevailed with the watermen to set him ashore, which they did very unwillingly, the tide being falling. Neither had they done it at all, but that he swore he would cast himself over-board if they did not. Upon this, they landed him; and being told by Eugenio what had happened, he got into the coach and drove to the garden-wall, and then sent to my sister, to desire to speak with her and me. How great was my surprize when

when I saw my lover! we could neither of us utter a word. But good Eugenio told us, as there had been so many difficulties which had liked to have prevented our ever meeting again, he thought it most adviseable for us to go into the church, and be united so as never to part more. Sir Harry was ravished at the proposal, and begged I would not refuse to comply with it. "Dear Sophia, cried he, my uncle has been a man of honour, and settled the estate upon me he promised; so that we shall have a pretty fortune, though not a splendid one, to make us happy with each other." My sister and her husband joined in entreating me not to oppose his happiness; I was overcome with their persuasions, and to be just in my story, did not need many inducements to reward so faithful a lover. We went into the church, which was accidentally open, and cleaning by the sexton, when Eugenio joined our hands. We gave her thanks for the obliging manner in which she satisfied our curiosity, and the gentlemen admired her resolution, being so young, to do what she did. Their graces again asked her pardon for not discovering her merit much sooner. How could you, lady Bellair, said the dutchess, throw off the fine woman, and put on a character so much below

below your temper, as well as family and fortune? Sophia smiled, and replied, her business was only to make herself useful, and not agreeable; that, says she, would have raised suspicions, which in my situation would have been improper. I am only, added she, sorry for one thing, which is, that my lord duke's valet was my adorer, as he often told me; and poor man, I do not know what I shall do for him, any more than I knew what I should do with him. For which reason I had determined to have explained myself very soon to the dutchess, if it were only to be rid of an amour which I had no inclination for; and (laughing very agreeably) cried, poor Monsieur Girard was a most violent lover, and talked of several kinds of French deaths he was determined to suffer, if I continued cruel. An impudent rogue! says the duke, to give himself airs of ever pretending to so pretty a lady. My lord, returned Sophia, do not be angry with him; I am not, I assure you: he thought our condition was equal, and that a lord's gentleman was no improper match for a lady's woman. Sir Thomas would have it, that Monsieur Girard shewed his judgment, and was an instance that his countrymen were not all such empty fops as they are usually represented:

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sented: I will be hanged, continued he, if the fellow has not some good English blood in his veins, for having such a taste for English beauty. Here we were forced to break off the discourse, by the arrival of Sir Harry and Eugenio. Aspasia beckoned her sister, and they both ran down to the gate to receive their husbands. The young baronet was received with great pleasure by us all, and is a very pretty gentleman, just twenty-four years of age. Sophia is twenty-two. We told him, it was an agreed thing that he and his lady were to be my guests, because he had done so much honour to my wedding-day as to be married upon it himself. And to mine too, says Amanda, so that as we are three brides and bridegrooms, we are determined not to part. This point being settled, and the weather being very fine, after tea the dutchess proposed a turn in the garden, so we left the gentlemen to themselves; but Sir Harry gave them the slip and came to us. He found us upon a lawn which is three hundred yards long and forty wide, covered with a fine green turf. He walked a great part of the time backwards with his face towards us, for we were all arm in arm. Aspasia said, she had now all she could wish for; Sir Harry's feat was but
twenty

twenty miles off, and her patroness did her the particular honours of her friendship, and introducing her to her grace's acquaintance. We staid in the garden till it was near supper-time, talking chiefly of the married state, and the methods of being happy in it; which we all agreed, were amiable compliances with the taste humours of our husbands. And as they were men of sense, we might be sure of the most grateful returns. For, says the dutchess, happiness is not always a serious thing. A good suit of cloaths, or a new tête that is pretty, gives a sort of happiness at the time one is pleased with either. I look upon it, that it is the same thing with regard to the married couple; a little sprightly chat, or any thing that shews good-nature in the wife, shall give the husband as substantial happiness, as if she was pouring forth all the wisdom of the queen of Sheba. Amanda said it was very true, since a man's thoughts and imagination cannot be always upon the stretch, as they must be when employed upon matters of moment, but required some relaxation: then it is, added she, as I take it, that a woman has a fine opportunity of obliging the man she is to spend her days with, by an endearing behaviour; which never fails of having a good effect, where

men are neither fools nor debauchees. Our husbands appearing at the end of the walk put a stop to our discourse; when Amanda told Sir Thomas, we had been very lavish in their commendation, but that she feared they had not been so genteel as to say any thing in praise of their wives. "So ungentleel, I suppose you mean, madam, replied he: but give me leave to say we are not in your debt, for we have left a full bottle of excellent claret upon the table, and would not open it, because it should not keep us any longer from you." That, says the dutchess, is a sure proof of your complaisance; if once a wife can have more forcible attractions than the bottle, she is happy indeed. This led us into a detail of the affair of drinking, which it was agreed, was often occasioned by the wife; who resolving not to let a man have ease at home, forced him to seek it elsewhere, and the bottle was like the streams of Lethe. True, said Sir Thomas, it makes a man forget his pain, and then, "armed with Bourdeaux he dares venture home." The duke was the only person dissenting: he admitted the wife's behaviour often occasioned the husband to have recourse to the bottle; but he had known several instances where the men had not that excuse.

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I rather think, continued he, that silly custom which prevails among us, of drinking as hard as we can when we meet, is much oftener the cause of the evil we complain of. "My lord, says the dutchess, the ladies are very much obliged to you for removing such a heavy charge as this from them; for as cards take up most of our time, drinking generally engrosses the mens; and the assiduity both are followed with, is merely for want of something else to do." Erastus told her grace, she had gone to the very bottom of the business. As for the gentlemen, it was great pity there was not some obligation; or that it were the fashion (which he said was the same thing) for them to apply themselves to polite learning, and lay up, by this means, a fund of good sense, so as to be able to employ themselves in useful, entertaining studies, when they were alone. That he thought reading was not only a cheaper, but a better diversion than drinking; and if a gentleman, or man of quality would make it a law to himself, to *read* but a pint a day in some good author, he was firmly persuaded it would save as many estates as constitutions; of which last, few could bear such continual steeping as had been practiced of late years.

We continued our walk till the bell rang for supper, and did not observe, till we were going to sit down, that Sir Harry and his lady were missing. It seems, whilst we were settling the affair of the bottle, they stole away from the company; and Sir Thomas said, he saw them both go into the summer-house, but did not think it right to take any notice. They came in however, and sat down to table; but eat very little. Just as it struck eleven, Sophia retired to be undressed; and presently after, the gentlemen having finished their bottle, and seen Eugenio and his lady into their coach, withdrew to their apartments.

I am sure I have made you a large amends for my six months silence; if you think I have not, in a week or two you shall hear further from

yours, &c.

SOPHRONIA.

LETTER

L E T T E R X I.

THE next morning we breakfasted early, that we might dress betimes, to be with Aspasia an hour or two before dinner. Erastus and I were the first up, and after giving orders in my family, about eight o'clock went into the garden. It was the finest October that had been seen of many years, which is my dear's favourite month. We went into the summer-house to enjoy the sweets of the morning, little expecting any of our guests would be stirring so soon. But in less than a quarter of an hour, the duke and dutchess came to us, perfectly ravished, as they said, with our pretty retirement. His grace told me, that I was privileged by my sex, or else he had some thoughts of sending me a challenge; for the dutchess was so prodigiously fond of me, that he could not prevail upon her to stay any longer with him: but he was resolved to have his revenge, by stealing away Erastus to ride out a mile or two before breakfast. I told him that would be impossible, for Sir Thomas and Amanda were then coming up to us. Whilst we were speaking, lady Bellair came tripping along, and presently after her Sir Harry with a letter in

his hand, talking to a servant in mourning, who seemed to have rode a great way by the dirt upon his boots. After the first compliments, Sir Hary made an apology for bringing the servant into the garden; but he said it was an affair he thought proper to communicate to the company: The letter was from his old friend and school-fellow Frank Bevil, whose father was lately dead. He tells me he is just married, and intends himself the pleasure to come with his lady and give us joy of our nuptials. How he should know any thing of it I wonder extremely, since it happened so lately. This letter is dated but the day before, and the bearer came fifty miles yesterday. Then we all asked the servant where his master was, and what time he thought he would be here? The fellow said, the letter was given him by his lady's woman, and he did not know any thing about it; only was bid to make what haste he could to Sir Harry Bellair. Then Erastus presented his humble service to Mr. Bevil, and bade his servant tell him, that it would be a singular happiness to see him and his lady, and that he would detain Sir Harry and lady Bellair till they saw him: adding, that here were more friends of his, that would be glad to congratulate him on the present occasion.

Lady

Lady Bellair asked the fellow, who it was he had married? He replied he did not know, but the servants said, she was very handsome, and very agreeable: he had not seen her himself, for he came home late the night before, and was sent out very early the next morning. After the servant had left us, Sir Harry then said, that Bevil's father married a widow to his second wife, who made a prodigious uneasiness in the family, and used her son-in-law very ill, though not worse than she did her husband, whom she distressed all manner of ways, but chiefly by her temper, which was the most imperious I ever saw in my life, continued he. Nothing done by her good man could please her, she was all contradiction; and rather than he should be at quiet, has been for and against the same thing twenty times in a day. She found the old gentleman an enemy to trouble, and therefore resolved to give him as much as possible; I make no doubt but she killed him. That the ladies may not think me too severe upon her character, I must acquaint you that I once saw her in a most extraordinary air. As her person was well enough, her husband was very fond of seeing it set out to the best advantage; and one day when we were at breakfast, he told her, my dear,

if we pay a visit this afternoon where you mentioned, I hope you will remember your promise to me to go in full dress, as you know that family are great observers of punctilio. At this she burst into tears, and immediately expressed her utmost dislike of the proposal. Sure the woman was a fool, (interrupted the dutchess) had he denied her the liberty of dressing, there might have been something to be said for her crying. Sir Harry returned, that her husband said to her in the mildest tone, my dear, why were cloaths bought at all, if never to be worn? Then truly she had a fit of humility possessed her; as at other times she had fits of chastity, and would part beds very often. Thus she plagued him without any intermission for some years. He was infinitely fond of his son, whom she was perpetually jarring with; at last he proposed to his father to let him travel, and remove at least one cause of his mother's uneasiness. This was very unwillingly complied with; but by the interposition of friends, who were no strangers to the merit of the young gentleman, or the petulance of the lady, he got an assignment of part of the estate sufficient for his expences, and about a year ago he and I were to have gone to Paris in search of Sophia; but I suppose he altered

altered his mind, and did not come the day I was to go on board the packet, so that I have not heard from him or seen him since. I have a great desire to see his lady; because I take it for granted he has been more discreet in his choice than his father was, and has got an agreeable good tempered woman at least. His estate may be near 2000l. a year; and he has it in his power to be happy, if too much money has not biassed him in the choice of a wife.

“Then you are resolved not to be too lavish of your favourable opinion of great fortunes, said the dutchess; though there are instances of ladies who have been excellent wives, notwithstanding their wealth.”

Sir Harry then perceived he had overshot himself, but said it was too true in general, that a great fortune on either side, if the man or woman is silly or imperious by nature, increased those imperfections to a very troublesome degree. You are right, (says Thomas) pride, which is the most abominable and uneasy thing in nature, when it possesses a little mind, any uncommon advantage, a great deal of money or beauty, which either the man or the woman enjoys, raises in them such an appetite for superiority, that they determine nobody shall enjoy any thing else. The woman turns termagant, and the man insolent;

insolent; let all such people live by themselves, and if possible, meet with such a reverse of fortune and complexion as may teach them humility. "It is very happy for me, said lady Bellair, that Sir Harry was so well reconciled to a small fortune." But, madam, says the dutchess, if your 6000l. had been ten times as much, Sir Harry would not have made that an objection. "Your grace is an instance that I ought not, replied the young baronet, for where good nature and good sense meet in a lady, she looks upon her money to be only instrumental in displaying those excellencies more perfectly." By this time breakfast was ready, and we went into the house. Nothing passed material till we mentioned the affair of dressing. Pray, says Sir Thomas, let me put in a petition, that velvet may be the word to-day; but I ask pardon, Sophronia must appear in dismal, because of her mourning, and lady Bellair I had forgot is a bride: for my part, I shall be in my regimentals. I did not think, replied the duke, that you had ever concerned yourself about dress, or that you really knew whether you were dressed or not. True, says the knight, when I am in your grace's company I do not; but conversing so much with the ladies as I have lately done, has improved my

my understanding prodigiously, and I have learned to know, that dress is a point of the greatest consideration, and as such, ought to be treated with the utmost dignity. I observed to Sir Thomas, that the good company had not been long enough in our country to conform to our custom of dressing so long before dinner as we used to do. And before he could answer, the dutchess said, the town fashion was not so easily laid aside at first; but she liked every custom here so well, that she intended to follow them all when she was at her lord's seat. So without any ceremony we left the gentlemen by themselves, and retired. The affair of dressing took up much less time than you may imagine, so that in less than an hour we were in our coaches, and drove to Aspasia's. Lady Bellair got out first, and ran to embrace her sister, whilst we followed at a distance. Our reception was equally cordial and polite. Nothing could more verify the truth of Sir Harry's observation, (that the incidental advantages of title or fortune, when they happen to some people, do not oppress, but set their good qualities in a more amiable light) than the behaviour of the whole company this day. Do not think me vain, when, in speaking of others I seem to include myself;

self; you have known me long enough, dear Amoret, not to impute this to vanity. My late accessions of title and estate do not give me half the pleasure that my Erastus's affection does, and the friendship that I am well persuaded is substantially fixed between the ladies now at my house and myself. The dutchess was so kind as to observe, that her acquaintance with Amanda and me, had introduced her to the most agreeable set of friends in the world; that she would entirely give up herself to our conversation, and we should be her only intimates. When she had a mind to be happier than ordinary, we might always be sure of her company; but, says she, I shall wear you out, as I do my cloaths. I told her grace, there was no danger of that; though perhaps she might be inclined some time hence to think us old-fashioned, and then might leave us off. She insisted, that she ought to be very angry at my entertaining such a thought; as our friendship was not owing to a suddenness or caprice, but was solidly founded on real merit, and real services, it could never be looked upon by her to be out of date. But come, says she, let us go on in our new-fashioned way, I see here is a harpsichord; Sir Thomas, you and I will dance a minuet.

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“ With all my heart, madam, says the knight; there is no harm in it, Sir, addressing himself to Eugenio, is there?” None in the least in good company, he replied; and to shew you that I am really of that opinion, I will go and disrobe, put on querpo, and make one amongst you. Sir Thomas and the duke were very much delighted with her grace’s proposal, and remembered how agreeably we passed an afternoon at the duke’s in town, in this very way. The ladies took care to lose no opportunity of displaying their charms, but performed to admiration. By mere accident there was a company of strollers travelling through the town with a couple of fidlers belonging to them. We borrowed the two corellies that evening, and by this means had an opportunity of dancing country-dances, which we did till near one, and then took our leaves. The next day Aspasia came to us, and we had another ball. In short, we spent a fortnight, in this agreeable manner, sometimes at Eugenio’s, and sometimes at our house, to the extreme satisfaction of the whole circle. When we were in no humour for dancing, we went in our coaches to take a view of the country for ten miles round. The dutchess declared against visits, and said, the uncertainty of our being at home, would

would prevent people's breaking in upon us; for she was resolved to have us all to herself, and grudged that any of our country ladies should intrude, whilst we were in the full enjoyment of one another's conversation. But as much resolved as we were to give no encouragement to be visited by our neighbours, in a day or two we were interrupted in our scheme. For as we were all dressed, intending to go out on a party of pleasure to a place six miles off, to meet Sir Thomas and Erasmus, who had been gone from home the day before, a coach drove up to the gate with three ladies in it. Immediately we seated ourselves in form to receive company. There alighted out of the coach a lady in black velvet, who seemed to be between forty and fifty, and the mother of two young ladies that came with her. They were dressed in white, and plain linnen, by which we perceived they were in their second mourning. I had never seen them before, and was in surprize who they should be. The footman conducted them into the room where we sat, and we received them with as much civility as possible. When they had seated themselves, the lady in black velvet addressing herself to me, said, as she had not the honour to know me, I might think it very parti-

particular her coming to pay me a visit, especially when I had so much good company at my house; but indeed, madam, said she, it was upon that very account I took this freedom, for I was in expectation of seeing Sir Thomas Worthy, whose father I knew perfectly well, and himself too when he was very young. I then introduced her to Amanda, telling her, that was Sir Thomas's lady, and that we were in expectation of him that evening, and hoped she would be so good as to give us her company, which she complied with. The dutchess and Sophia kept their eyes fixed upon her, to try if they could discover who she was, but to no purpose. At last she said she would keep the company in suspense no longer as to her history, but would defer the telling her name till Sir Thomas arrived. She could not say much in behalf of her setting out in life, for she added, the first thing she did was to enter into a treaty of marriage without her father's consent. My husband, ladies, says she, being born to no estate, had notwithstanding the necessary arts for acquiring one; being bred up in country business, and thoroughly acquainted with agriculture, which, perhaps, of all others, is the honestest method of raising a fortune. My father was civil to us after our wedding,

wedding, which gave us some hopes of a reconciliation, especially as we had staid a month at his house. But when we saw no accommodation was likely to be made between him and my husband, my duty being now transferred to the latter, he commanded me to come away: and because he would not give the old gentleman the least opportunity of using him ill, he removed into another county, where he hired a large farm with an excellent old seat upon it, applied himself wholly to tillage, and had very good success. In four or five years after we married, my husband's sister, who was with me when I left my father's, having been married to a rich old bachelor who left her a widow worth 8000*l.* was carried off suddenly; and having never had a child, my husband inherited her fortune. He was always a prudent wary man, and extremely fond of his two girls; and ever since our income increased, he laid his commands upon us all to appear like gentlewomen. We have removed from place to place where there was any money to be got by hiring land, and (added she smiling) though we are rich, we are very honest. Several of the nobility deserting their family seats, being imposed upon by their stewards, we have come into those seats at very reasonable rents.

rents. He married his girls about a month ago, one to a barrister, and the other to a young clergyman. He gave them 4000l. a-piece, and will leave them as much more at his death. The lawyer is a man of fortune and good practice, the clergyman has preferment to the amount of 300l. a year. This, says she, ladies, is our history in brief. We returned her thanks for the account, and enquiring where the young ladies husbands were, she told us they were obliged both of them to attend a law-suit in town, and left their wives but this morning, or else she had taken the liberty to have brought them along with her. I had a mind to know a few more particulars, and told her, I hoped she would not take it amiss, if I had some reasons to desire a more circumstantial account of her management; that as she had not informed us of her father's ever being reconciled, how she and her spouse could, from the first, make so genteel an appearance, and get so much money into the bargain. In return, we would oblige her with an account of ourselves. With a great deal of good-nature, she resumed her story in the following manner. "I mentioned before my leaving my father's house a month after our marriage. A thousand pounds was all I ever had from my

my own family. My husband's mother and sister were extremely obliging, and in a short time the latter married away as I told you, and died, leaving all to her brother. Her mother survived her but six weeks, so that I had the whole family to myself. My husband's estate was a purchase of 300l. a year, and the farm we lived in about two. He grazed, malted, and turned hop-merchant, and had no expences but what were necessary and unavoidable ; none but what he determined his wife should partake with him. This kept him at home, or what is next to it, kept his home with him, viz. his wife :— At her saying this, I winked upon the dutchess and Amanda, who heard her with great delight.—For (continued she) he never went upon any party of pleasure without me, if it deserved that name, as we seldom had any body with us. But we either rode out on horseback ; or, as soon as he bought me a chariot, one day in a week (his business not permitting him to do it oftener) we drove to a neighbour's, or made a little excursion of eight or ten miles, and home again by supper-time, when it was coach-day. As soon as his girls grew big enough to go along with me, our circumstances increasing with our family, he got him a coach that
might

might carry us all, which has ever since been entirely at our command. For as he keeps a great number of horses, there is always a pair for our use, and a couple of servants. At night, when he comes home, fatigued with his day's business, we are ready to receive him with the utmost cheerfulness. Some little trifle or other serves us for supper; after which, one of his girls reads to him as he takes his pipe, if he is in no humour for chat. A bottle of wine is set upon the table, and he is in the highest spirits after he has taken a few glasses; says, it is the greatest pleasure he knows, to take pains on our account, because we make him such amends, and it is with the utmost difficulty he is ever prevailed with to stay out an evening, because it keeps him from his fire-side, where he meets with open looks, endearing behaviour, and as the country goes (continued she) a genteel appearance, for he is constantly making my girls and me very handsome presents. Thus he lives within himself, says, we are his best companions, and we do all we can to preserve his good opinion. Once a year we go up to town for a month or six weeks, and are now upon our journey thither, intending to follow my sons-in-law, and take a little diversion with some

some relations we have there.—The arrival of the gentlemen in this place put a stop to the lady's narrative, and obliges me to conclude, dear Amoret,

Your's, affectionately,

SOPHRONIA.



LETTER XII.

UPON the gentlemens coming in, the lady I mentioned was presented to Sir Thomas by Amanda, who saluted her and her daughters very politely; “Mrs. Vincent, I think, madam, says he, if I mistake not.” To which the usual reply was made, “Sir, the same at your service. The company has hitherto, continued she, been pleased to treat me as a person of distinction; you will now, Sir, be so good as to undeceive them, and let them know that I am but your steward's wife. I could not in gratitude pass the house where you were, without paying my respects to yourself and your excellent lady, whom I have heard much of, but never saw till this afternoon.”

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The knight told her, he knew no such person as his steward's wife. That indeed he remembered when he was a boy, a very fine woman in his neighbourhood, named miss Elton, who being ill used by an extravagant old father, married a friend of his, that had saved him a great deal of money, and improved every estate he rented. Erasmus confirmed this, and added, that Mr. Vincent had originally chalked out the plan which he had pursued for Sir Thomas, and intended to put in execution for my lord duke, he hoped with equal success. I told the lady, that I hoped she and her family would make us good neighbours, tho' this first visit was not intended to us, and particularly that she would not think of going any further that night. She would have excused herself from the number of friends I had already with me, but in the end I prevailed.

After supper, the gentlemen being left to themselves, with the liberty however of joining us when they thought fit, Mrs. Vincent told us, she expected we should make good our promise, of acquainting her with our history, which she was very sure must be every way delightful. Her grace said, she should certainly have that satisfaction; but as every thing

thing of late that had given us entertainment, was very surprizing, or at least very new, and her own story in particular was old and familiar to her, she begged that she would first finish her's, of which we had had only a sketch, and to-morrow we would not fail to comply with her request. Mrs. Vincent then resumed her narration in the following manner, addressing herself to the dutchess. " I had the mortification, madam, tho' I was the eldest of three sisters, to see the two younger married before me; and what was a much severer stroke, to perceive my father was daily wasting his substance. For under the pretence of providing for his daughters, having no son, he obtained an act of parliament to sell part of his estate, to pay his debts and secure portions for us. But either his debts were greater than he imagined, or his inclinations to spend as fast as he could, was as great, so that my mother could only get 100l. a year for life, and 1000l. a-piece settled upon us. All this while he kept a noble house, and stood for the county, but lost it, which cost him a large sum; that indeed the way we lived, it was surprizing we managed so well. Withal he was very obliging to my mother, and fond of me; denied us nothing by way of dress and equipage,

equipage, so that I was brought up in the most useless indolent way that could be, when he knew at the same time, he could not give me a fortune to support it. It was not long before I discovered it, by the settlement I mentioned. Then I began to think what I had best do, and resolved to get me a husband to help to maintain me. A mercenary view this, I must confess; but then I was determined I would make a good wife, to whose lot soever I should fall, and this made me easy as to that point. Within a mile of our house lived a gentleman-farmer's widow, with a son and daughter. The son was intended for a profession, and sent to the university; but, the old man dying, was called into the country to manage his mother's business, which was very large. When he came home, he saw every thing in so prosperous a way, that he quitted all designs of betaking himself to a profession, and resolved to apply himself wholly to farming; which, with the assistance of an old servant, he became perfect master of in a short time. I cast my eyes upon the young farmer, who was much about my age, and designed to get him for a husband, but how to compass it was the difficulty. One day I met his mother and sister at a visit, and immediately took

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a great deal of notice of the latter, and gave her an invitation to our house, which she accepted of, and in a little time came with her mother, in an old chaise which was driven by her brother. The old lady and her daughter were handsomely dressed, and my spark in a plain cloath coat, waist-coat, and breeches, like a substantial farmer; tho' my partiality made me discover, or fancy I did, under this disguise, the scholar and the gentleman. He has told me often since, that he had no intention of coming, only he could not spare his man to drive the ladies, and would not trust them with any other than himself; but that since that visit, he could never get me out of his head. I own I was more pleased with the thoughts of having him, on the account of his being able to maintain me, than any other consideration; till upon further acquaintance, I was as unable to get him out of my head too. Their visit was short, and when they pressed me not to deny them the pleasure of seeing them, too long, they insisted, if it were possible, that I would set a day; the young lady said laughing, that I might be in no danger of stumbling over their milk-pails, or run the hazard of falling into their cheese tubs, for their whole house was a dairy. Upon this I let them know,
I would

I would return the favour of their very kind visit that day fortnight. Next week I had a new suit of cloaths from town, and was resolved, when I went, to put them on, and do all the execution I could. My mother was prevented going along with me by a slight indisposition, so that I had the chariot to myself. My linnen was answerable to my cloaths, and tho' the lace was of a pattern a year old, yet I thought it would do very well for the country. So having got every thing in order, I drove away with the most murderous intent that could be imagined. When I got to the house, I was surpris'd to see only miss Sally come to wait on me out of the chariot, and was heartily vexed to find her brother was not in the way, but conceal'd it as much as possible. She led me to her mamma, who in a pretty neat parlour, sat expecting me, and rose up to salute me. They were people of good sense, and had seen enough of the world to be very agreeable company. The old lady with a great deal of good nature, excus'd her son's not being at home, as he was oblig'd to go to a fair, and would think it a great misfortune to be out of the way, when I did them the honour of a visit. I bowed to her, and said very carelessly, that business

must be followed, and therefore there needed no apology. After I had staid a proper time, and was preparing to take my leave, I looked at my watch, and finding it had stopped, begged the ladies would let me know what was o'clock? They both said they had no watches, and that their clock was gone to be cleaned. I begged they would let me order the chariot, because our family would stay supper for me. Just then Mr. Vincent came in and made his compliments to me; and upon his sister's telling him our whimsical distress, and desiring to know what was o'clock, he said, his pocket was picked as he came thro' the fair, and he had lost his watch. Nay Sir, said I, that is wrong, for I see the chain this very instant. At this he laughed, but said, his watch was the greatest liar in the world, and could not be believed a minute in a month. But I insisted upon seeing what was o'clock, and he said, if I would be so good as to promise to stay but half an hour after I had seen, he would resolve me; which I consented to. I then set my watch by his, and it was near seven. As we were comparing our accounts of the time, he told me, he was surprised to see I had no picture among the seals and trinkets; that he thought a lady should
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be as proud of that trophy, a lover's face, at the chain of her watch, as to have him wear her chains in reality. I told him that was a piece of furniture I was at present unprovided with, and that I should never have a gold chain to bind any lover. But if any gentleman thought it a post of honour, would make suitable application, and be at the expence of his own picture, by Spencer, I would do him the pleasure to be fine at his cost. Having staid longer than I proposed, I took my leave. Several visits passed in a little time, and miss Sally and I, as you may suppose, grew extremely intimate. One day when I was at her house, she told me that her brother, fearing to offend me by disclosing it to me himself, had desired her to acquaint me with his violent affection for me; and concluded, my dear miss Elton, do not be too cruel: you have often expressed yourself in his favour, and tho' I am but a novice in these matters, I can see by your eyes that he is not indifferent to you. He waits without, determined not to see you, till he has received a favourable message by me: shall I call him in or no? I told her, blushing, that she might do as she pleased. She then left the room, and her brother came to me. After a thousand soft things, usual on

these occasions, as I told him, but which he assured me he never said to any woman before, he begged that if my heart were not engaged, he might have the transport to think I would give it him in exchange for his own. I told him, tho' I was one of his sister's fine ladies, I had but a very small fortune, and there was a father's consent to be obtained, who expected to be consulted in all engagements of this kind. He replied, fortune was no consideration with him: give me but yourself, dear madam, and let Mr. Elton do what he will with your money. I told him I was much surprised at these overtures, and if he mistook my waiting on his sister, I should be obliged to forbear my visits — and was going out to order the chariot. But he prevented me by falling upon his knees, and telling me, I could not but perceive his passion was of the sincerest kind. In short, he said so much, that I could not help giving him all the encouragement that was proper. He insisted upon seeing me at his house again very soon, but I told him my too frequent visits would infer a suspicion I was unwilling to give my father as yet; who, he knew as well as I, valued himself extremely upon his family. By this time miss Sally came in, and seeing something

thing in our faces that looked like mutual consent, come, says she, my dear, let me join your hands. You can never have a man with a better heart, nor more devoted to you; and do not hinder his happiness. I let her do as she pleased, so she put my hand into his. He kissed it with raptures, and embraced me very tenderly. Before we parted, his sister pressed me to meet her at an assembly at a market town about five miles off. I promised, if it were possible, I would be there, and take her along with me in the chariot. When the day came I dressed myself to the greatest advantage, and drove to the farm house. As I saw an undesigning honesty in my lover, I thought the sooner I brought our amour to a conclusion, the better; and I flattered myself that I should not fare the worse for it after we married. I had trusted my mother with my secret, who approved of my choice, but concealed it from my father. His extravagant way of life still continued, nor was there any likelihood of his retrieving his fortune. So that we looked upon his consent to be unnecessary; in which, however, we were certainly wrong. At my arrival at my lover's, Sally was waiting for me, and without my alighting came into the chariot. She told me her

brother would meet us at the assembly, but that he was gone that morning to receive 200l. for some bullocks he had sold; was infinitely delighted at the hopes I had given him of making him happy; that he was a sober man, extremely well respected by all the neighbouring gentlemen, and if he lived would be very rich. I am not, continued she, like many sisters, for engrossing all the family substance to myself: I would fain see him well married, and to you above any woman in the world. Matters were gone too far for me to affect any strangeness, so that I hearkened to all she said with much satisfaction. There was a great deal of company at the assembly, and my spark, as soon as the chariot drove up, gave me his hand, and brought an elderly gentleman who did the same to Sally. Being a pretty, agreeable, and a lively girl, he fell in love with her. He was a chapman and correspondent of her brother's, and afterwards married her. As we returned back in the chariot, our two gentlemen on horse-back guarding us, we laid the plan of my flight with her brother, which I put in execution that day month. My mother undertook to make matters easy with my father, and carried a very dutiful letter I wrote to him on the occasion.

caſion. Leave was given me, after much ſolicitation, to introduce my ſpouſe to him, and to aſk his pardon for what I had done. He received us with civility, and that was all; for I over-heard him ſaying to my mother, one day after dinner, that he wiſhed the 1000l. ſettled upon me had been divided between my ſiſters; for at preſent it was out of his power to ſhew, by any ſubſtantial proof, which of his daughters had or had not diſobliged him; the others being well married, and with his conſent. After this declaration, I could not think of ſtaying much longer, ſo in three weeks or a month, I went to my huſband, who had been gone a few days before. The farm we then lived in was Sir Thomas Worthy's, and till my mother-in-law died, the family was chiefly under her inſpection. I conſidered with myſelf that I had an excellent huſband, yet I really ſeemed to be a rent-charge upon him. Therefore as ſoon as ſhe was dead, I begged of him to let me know what I could do that might bring in ſomething to the common ſtock; for I was unwilling he ſhould take all the pains, and I none. He was much ſurprized at my declaration, and when I told him I had conſtitution and ſpirits good enough to ſupport any fatigue; with a

great deal of tenderness he said, if I would only rise in a morning, and see to the business within doors, it would be of great advantage, and I should have all I got for pin-money. Upon this I resolved to be up with the first, and follow my dairy maids, see to my butter and cheese, calves, pigs, and fowls. My sister Sally and her husband once took me in my jumps and high pattens, in the midst of all my business. I would have slipped away as they came to the door in their coach, but she cried out, my dear sister, you shall not escape us. When they were come in, we could not help laughing very heartily to see how the world was altered; she was now the fine lady, and I the country farmer's wife.

I had three children the three first years of our marriage, a son and two daughters. The former lived till he was turned of seven years old, and then was lost at school by a very unhappy accident. The squire of the parish had given the children a remedy upon his birth-day; and being a man of more humanity than to take any delight in seeing the bones of his fellow-creatures broke, their limbs disabled, and their eyes beat out, had proposed, among other diversions, a prize of a guinea, for any stout fellow who should

should undertake to put another of the same size and strength into a sack. As boys are naturally fond of imitating every thing they see of this kind, this was their principal diversion afterwards at their hours of play. And one of his school-fellows having been too strong for poor Tommy, and enclosed him in the sack, would needs try to carry him upon his shoulders; but unhappily let him fall with his head against a stone, which fractured his skull, and he died the next day. As my daughters grew up, they assisted me in looking after my business, and all the family in their turns, contributed towards bringing in money. We have had no reason to complain, for, excepting the death of my son, we have met with no loss of any consequence, and have left every estate we tenanted, much better than we found it, as the landlords themselves have gratefully acknowledged.

Here Mrs. Vincent ended her narrative, and the gentlemen having by this time finished their bottle, the whole company withdrew to their apartments. The next morning, the old lady and her two daughters set out betimes for London; and after a month's stay, we were forced to part with all our guests. The dutchess and Amanda being far gone in their pregnancy, diverted the design of seeing the duke's

duke's estate this year; but we are under a promise of doing it next summer. After abundance of tears between us, their graces, Sir Thomas and Amanda went away. Sir Harry and lady Bellair will spend the winter at Aspasia's. Thus, my dear Amoret, you have had a very tedious account of what you may think a romantic affair. But if you are a good girl, and will do as I advise you, I will introduce you to the acquaintance of them all. You see, good humour and sweetness of behaviour are the burthen of my song; these can never fail where people of sense are concerned, and as I said before, consider what you are doing. Ill-nature can never make any man happy. On the contrary, tenderness and indulgence in a wife, will produce the greatest fondness in her husband. If you find I am mistaken, never believe any more,

your sincere friend,

SOPHRONIA.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

AMORET to SOPHRONIA.

IT will be a great pleasure to my dear Sophronia, (for I cannot call you by any other name, because of our early intimacy) to acquaint her, that I am become a sincere convert ; which I am persuaded, had you not taken prodigious pains with me, I should never have been. But that I may deserve your good opinion, I do assure you I have been so for some months.

The exhortation at the end of your eighth letter, about “ Old age creeping upon me unawares,” gave me the first alarm ; and the cutting reflection, that “ so much of my time had been lost, and I was likely to lose more, without gaining any happiness,” set me a thinking. But to deal ingenuously with you, I could not bring my spirit to stoop, though my understanding was convinced. To alter my behaviour at once I found was impossible, and to persist in it, I was now sensible was destruction. How to bring about a change I did not know, so as to save my pride, which hitherto had scorned every thing that looked like compliance or submission.

mission. At last I bethought myself of the following method, which was, to have Philander make some fresh overtures to me about it; but through my perverseness, he had given himself no trouble concerning me a great while, and I had great reason to fear his behaviour might settle to an absolute indifference, which when I considered, I dreaded of all things. But one day, soon after the receipt of that letter, I was determined to put my design in execution, which I shall now give you an account of. I began in a morning, as soon as I got up, for we had parted beds for above a month. I gave orders for my breakfast to be in my own room, pretending an indisposition. When Philander returned from walking about his fields, he asked the maid where her mistress was? She told him, I breakfasted above because I was not well. He came up stairs, and found me sitting by the fire, with my tea-equipage before me, and one of your letters open upon the table. He took no notice, but after drinking a cup or two was going away. I told him, I did not imagine he had had so little curiosity as to see a letter upon my table, and not to make any enquiry after it. He replied very coldly, that I had always been mistress

tress of my own conduct, and he had no inclination to pry into my affairs. This vexed me not a little. I said, he might read it if he pleased : it was from a lady of his acquaintance, who had been so obliging as to send me a great many letters lately of a very entertaining nature. He returned, he was very busy with his workmen below stairs, and could not stay to read it now; but I resolved he should, and then let him know it was from you, and gave him your first letter, which being not so long as the rest, I told him he might read it without much loss of time. He shook his head as he perused it; said he was much obliged to you, but was very sorry for your ill success in throwing away so much good counsel upon one, who had made it a law to herself, to run counter to every thing that her best friends could say. This, I insisted upon it, was a very hard censure, and he did not do me justice; but desired him to read the whole collection, if not upon my account, at least upon yours, and he would find I was not altogether so contemptible a creature, by my having a lady of your sense employ so much of her time in giving me advice. That, as the letters were long, it would take a whole afternoon to read them over; I had a mind he should see them,

and

and begged him to have no other business that day. He answered, that out of respect to you he would; but nothing else could keep him within: and then went away. Nobody can tell the pain I endured, when I expected that the least overture on my side would have thrown him into raptures, to see him treat me with bare civility, and a coldness more piercing than hatred itself. I confess, I was almost distracted. I could not bow my stubborn heart; could not call him back, nor explain to him upon any account. In this uneasy situation I did not know what to do. He was gone, and I had no opportunity of shewing him any fondness, and much less of treating him as usual. In this dilemma I took my needle-work, and fate to it half an hour; hummed over an old song or two, (which I always found of great service to me whenever I was in my mad fits) called up my maid, and gave her such a lecture for some trifling omission, that she told me very roundly, I must provide myself with another servant; for my temper was so uneasy of late, she had rather live in a jail than with me. This made me exalt my voice, (alias scold) so that the girl ran out of the room and left me to myself. I went down stairs, and took a turn in the garden, to consider
what

what I had best do. I could not think at all ; my mind was nothing but confusion. I then went up to my chamber again, and resolved to dress me as you have recommended in some of your letters, and came down to dinner in my best apparel. I had forgot I was to be sick that day, and did not recollect it till I was set down to dinner. Philander seeing me thus bedizened, said, he was glad to find my indisposition was so slight as not to keep me within, and believed the air would do me service. He asked, whether I would have the coach or chariot got ready, but not what visit I intended to make ; and indeed there was not any family near us that required so much finery as I had bestowed upon myself. The ridiculousness of my present circumstances, as the being dressed so exactly, when I had nobody to visit ; and my perceiving he saw perfectly well, it was only one of my airs, which he was determined not to see, made me so mad, that I fell a crying as soon as the cloth was taken away, and asked him the reason of his using me so cruelly. He asked me to explain myself. I said, he could not but know I did not design to go out. “ No, really ? he cried ; he thought I had, by my dress.” Pitiful, poor indifference ! said I, sobbing as if
my

my heart would break ; and told him he had neither goodness nor generosity in his nature. “ Yes, madam, he replied, you shall see I have both ; and if you will give me proper encouragement, I will convince you that it has not been in your power, with all your airs, to extinguish, but only to suspend, my affection. But, continued he, I will ease you at once, by telling you that I foresaw all this in the morning, and applaud your resolution to copy our worthy friend in her *visiting-days*, and this I hope is the first of them. He added, he would only beg leave to settle some affairs with his people below, and in half an hour he would return and spend the remaining part of the day with me, and read over the letters.” All my pettish humours vanished at once ; I hung about his neck and cried very heartily, but it was for joy, to find him a man of so much honour, as to seem yet to take pleasure in such an unaccountable wretch as I had been to him, and promised he should never meet with the like treatment again. He received this declaration with extreme satisfaction, and gave orders for his workmen to wait upon him the next day ; but as they had several miles home, I would not suffer him to send them away, but said, I would deny myself the pleasure of
his

his conversation till his business was over. Upon which he embraced me tenderly and left me. When he was gone, I found my heart so much lighter, and my spirits so prodigiously airy, that I had never experienced the like. For I was now sensible, happily sensible, that true affection dilates the heart, and gives inexpressible pleasure; but moroseness contracts it to such a degree, that I believe, if the experiment could be made, it would appear, the blood is squeezed through the small passages of it so slowly, and in such small quantities, as to gnaw and corrode it. (This to shew my philosophy.) I went into my chamber, and called my maid. The girl had been crying till her eyes were swelled in her head; but to make her amends, I gave her a very good flowered silk night-gown, a pair of silk stockings and laced shoes, and as she was much about the same size with me, bid her dress herself in them that afternoon. I then ordered her to get the drawing-room ready, for I should not go out, but would drink coffee there. The girl seemed at least as much pleased with the alteration of my temper, as with my present, and went very chearfully to do as I had bid her. In a little time I went into it, and began to relish the place exceedingly,
and

and thought the furniture looked very well, though the room had been shut up almost a year. Every thing I saw in it reproached me with a silent eloquence for what I had been. Methought I was pleased with the very chairs, and glasses to-day, though I had never been affected with them before. The alteration was in my own mind; and if so, why might not my husband have been the same deserving amiable man a year ago, if I had behaved to him then in the manner I did just now? This reflection I pursued much longer, till I thought it was time to give it over, for it really began to sink my spirits. And I was unwilling there should appear any cloud in that face, where Philander for a long time had seen nothing else. So after traversing the room pretty often backwards and forwards, and viewing myself in the glasses, as you did at the dutchess's, I sat down, expecting him. He came in presently after, and took me in his arms. "Now, my dear, says he, if you will not take it ill, I will inform you what I dislike, or rather, what behaviour it is that I do like, which is this. Let me see at all times that you take pleasure in your husband; never brush me over carelessly with your eye, as if I had no relation to you. Speak to me in a
morn-

morning when you come first down, and with a little more complaisance ; or, if you will pardon the expression, a little more good manners. Do not suffer your spirits to sink, nor your carriage to fall from good breeding to an awkward clownish familiarity. As you see others treat me with tolerable decency, do you the like. If at any time matters go wrong and put me out of humour, do not you add to it by being as much out of humour yourself. If I am unreasonably so, step up to your chamber ; wait a little while till my thoughts can settle ; and when you come down again be chearful, or at least affect to be so, and “ assume a virtue if you have it not.” I promise thus far, that you shall never have any substantial reason to be offended with me. And as I know you can think, talk, and behave with politeness, let me have the pleasure to see I have married a lady with these qualifications, and not like one of the vulgar. For indeed, my dear, your cloaths and jewels excepted, for four years last past I have not seen you appear like yourself, especially when we have been alone. If you will be very good, Amoret, you will find me laugh at my being thought very uxorious ; for it is my intention to confine my time and conversation

tion chiefly, if not entirely to you. In the mean while do not neglect little things, which (however they may be esteemed by some people) are the out-works of happiness in a married life, the observation of which will preserve good humour on either side; but if not strictly watched, moroseness, fullness, and at last indifference, if not an absolute confirmed hatred of each other will infallibly succeed. I have no more to say, because I would not give you any uneasiness."

The tenderness of this scene, which lasted near an hour and half, prevented my giving any directions for supper; for as we had lived in an unaccountable way so long, regular suppers were left off; and I used to eat just as it came into my head, at seven, or nine, or sometimes ten o'clock. But this night, after the first chearful meal we had had for several months, (for he was so extremely polite as to avoid any thing that might have the least tendency towards a recollection, or repeating of old stories) we went to bed; "The lady pleased, and the good man content."

Every thing being now settled to our mutual satisfaction, Philander desired my leave to send for Julia home again. The poor thing being quite frightened at my
ill

ill humours, asked his consent to return to London, which he gave her very readily, and she has been some time at Mr. Sergison's, a woollen-draper in Cheap-side. This I need not inform you of; for by several letters she wrote to me, I know you were so extremely kind as to give her an invitation to your house for a few days, which she accepted. Though you were so genteel, as not to drop the least hint of it in any part of your correspondence; imagining very justly, that even the mentioning her name to me would be a tacit reproach for my using an orphan no better. But at that time I used every body alike. I had not heard from her lately, which I was a little surprized at, as she used to be punctual in her letters to me once a week, and had no reason to complain of my answers to them; for, whatever I may do when people are within hearing, I never scold at them with pen and ink, but leave that to your writers of controversy.

This poor girl, who is very shy of telling any thing of her history, (nor indeed can she take any great pleasure in the relation, was so unhappy as to lose her parents in a great fire at London, when a whole street was burnt down, and a great many lost their lives; nor does she to this hour

hour know the names of her father and mother. Several young children were taken out of the flames by charitable people ; and Julia, who was but a year and half old, and very much burnt in her leg, was carried to the house of an apothecary who took care of her. The child was stark-naked ; for the fire happening in the evening, it was supposed she was just undressed to be put to bed. The good apothecary and his wife nursed her as if she had been their own daughter, and having no children, were extremely fond of her. As each house had a young child or two in it ; when every thing was in that terrible confusion, it was not known to whom several of the youngest belonged ; but some of them as they grew up, by the likeness they bore to their parents, came afterwards to be known. Unfortunately for poor Julia, there was not any body whom she resembled. The inhabitants of that street were chiefly of the poorer sort, so it was judged she was the child of people who came lately into one of those houses. She was bred up at the apothecary's till she was ten years of age, and then sent to a boarding-school. For the honest couple were all along persuaded she was some gentleman's child that had been put out to nurse ; which if true, there would

would certainly have been in all that time some enquiries made, especially at the first. But nothing of this kind ever happened that we know of; and her generous benefactor dying, left her to the care of Mr. Sergison, who married his sister, and is first cousin to Philander. She has been very little in town of late years, except once about a twelvemonth ago, and now again since I commenced termagant. The gloomy season of the year coming on, I shall want her extremely for a companion at needle-work, during any necessary absence of my spouse. Adieu! dear madam, and continue the favour of your correspondence to one who has profited so much by it; and who is, with the utmost gratitude and affection,

Your faithful,

and obliged humble servant,

AMORET.

H

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

SOPHRONIA TO AMORET.

YOUR last letter, my dear friend, could not but be doubly agreeable to me, as the contents were unexpected. I had great reliance on your good sense, and made no doubt whenever you thought fit to exert it properly, that it would fix you one time or other in the class of good wives; but, as divines tell us miracles are ceased, I own I did not think your conversion would be either so sudden or so remote as that of the Jews. Eraustus was extremely rejoiced as well as I at this happy change, and we both sincerely congratulate you upon it. We could not help communicating our satisfaction to Sir Harry and lady Bellair, who are still at Aspasia's, and are no strangers to the former part of your history. Mr. Bevil, the young gentleman that should have travelled with Sir Harry, is come into the neighbourhood to pay a visit to the baronet, and has brought his bride with him. And pray who do you think she is?—not to keep you too long in suspense—no other than *Miss Julia*, I assure you; but so improved since I saw

I saw her in town, that I hardly knew her. Mr. Bevil intended to have seen his old friend and fellow-traveller some time ago, (as I believe I mentioned to you in a former letter) but was prevented by his executorship, his father's affairs having been left involved. But having dispatched the chief of his business, he set out from London, and desired his friend to meet him upon the road; and two days ago they came to Aspasia's. Eraustus and I were invited to dinner there; and you may imagine my surprize, when I saluted the bride, and found her to be my old acquaintance. She is taller than the common size of women, and withal (what is not very usual) extremely genteel. Her spouse is a very pretty gentleman, and seems infinitely fond of her, and after tea gave us the following account of his amour. "I must, said he, in the first place, beg pardon of Sir Harry for not accompanying him in search of his dear Sophia; but I was prevented in this manner. The night before our intended expedition, I stepped into the playhouse. It was my fortune to sit next a pretty young creature, who had another young lady with her. The play was the Orphan, and the fair unknown was prodigiously attentive to all the tender passages. As the distress

increased, it drew tears from her fine eyes. I could not help taking notice of her concern, and wondered, when she knew it was not real, but only a representation, that she should be so sensibly touched; and asked her particularly why she was so? She told me, because she was an orphan herself: and poor Monimia's misfortunes were of so delicate a nature, that she thought every young woman who had lost her parents, must be alarmed at seeing them represented; as the case might possibly be her own. Well, thought I to myself, this is cleverly put indeed; and could not help taking her for some fille de joye, who had personated that real concern, and did it to admiration. I gave myself a few airs under this persuasion, till the fair one declined all further talk with me, and begged I would be pleased not to sit so close to her; at the same time calling to her companion (whom she named Miss Fanny) to desire a pinch of her snuff. I was going to be more impertinent, but she gave me so many decent rebuffs, that I began to be ashamed of myself for accosting a person in this strain, whom her looks spoke to be a woman of fashion, but her behaviour much more. I then altered my stile, and treated her with good manners the remaining part of the play.

play. When it was over, I begged to have the honour of handing her ladyship to her coach. This was offending as much the other way, for she told me I was very unlucky in my address, she neither deserving the former freedom nor the present respect. She then gave me her hand. As I led her out of the play-house, I pressed her to know who she was. She told me as she stepped into the coach, the discovery could give me no pleasure, for she had neither friends nor fortune. The other young creature got in after her, and they drove away. My fellow was waiting for me, and I ordered him to dog the coach, and bring me word where it set down the ladies. It was past twelve when he returned, so horridly drunk, that I could only understand a word or two about the *Serjeant's Head* in Cheapside; but whether both the women were set down there, or which of the two, he could give no information. I was very uneasy, and did not sleep a wink all night. I could not get her out of my head. Her modest reluctance to be engaged in conversation with me when I put on my airs; her tender concern, which I plainly saw, or now thought I saw, was unaffected; added to her beauty and genteel behaviour, had set me all in a flame; and I determined to go

the next day in quest of her. I learned from my fellow, when he was sober, that the coach stopped about the middle of Cheapside, and again in Gracechurch-street, but he did not observe which of the ladies was left at either place. He had forgot the sign in Cheapside where the coach stopped first, but believed he could find it if he were to look about him again. I was so provoked with the rascal, that I could almost have killed him for leaving me in such an uncertainty. As if it were likely he should know a house in the day-time, he took so slender an observation of over night. I then thought the best way was for me to go into Cheapside, and take the fellow along with me and try what discoveries we could make together. Accordingly, I took coach, resolving to dine near the place, where, by his account the ladies were set down, and ordered him to ply about all day, and make proper enquiries. Which he did very luckily. For making several sleeveless errands into shops, enquiring for several persons; as he was in one of them, he saw a young lady come through in the same dress he had seen her the night before, and get into a coach. The fellow, in an affected surprize, said, he had been servant to her father, and asked if she was not Miss ———? and then

then made an artful hesitation, as if he could not immediately recollect her name. The master of the shop told him, it was Miss Fanny Sergison. "Ay, says the fellow, the very same, I have carried her to school a hundred times; does she live here, pray Sir?" Answer was made, no, but at the sign of the Lamb, about twenty or thirty doors higher on the other side of the way. "Then, says the fellow, I will make bold and call upon my mistress, though she has forgot me I dare say." And indeed I do not know how she should remember him, as she had never seen him. He came flying to me with this account immediately. The next day I dined at the same place; and when it was proper to go over, went to Mr. Sergison's and enquired for Miss Fanny. Her father seeing me so very smart, for I had dressed myself out to advantage, seemed to look a little shy. But I told him, I had no particular business with the young lady, but that if he pleased, he might hear all that passed. Upon this I was conducted into the dining-room, where she was with her mamma. I told her, I had been very uneasy ever since I saw her at the play, for my rudeness to her and the lady that was with her; and was now come to beg their pardons. She said, if there was any

offence to be taken at what passed, her cousin was the person that ought to be offended, because my discourse was chiefly with her. I acknowledged it, and added, I was in hopes she had been within, that I might have excused myself to her in particular. She told me, her cousin had lodged there indeed, but that she was now gone into the country, having taken coach in Grace-church-street that very night I saw her at the play. The vexation this gave me, was, I dare say, very visible; for to comfort me, the young lady told me she was sure if I were sensible of my fault, her cousin, one of the sweetest tempered women alive, whenever I saw her, upon submission, would readily pardon me. She then desired me to drink tea with her and her mamma, or else she threatened to set her cousin against me. Our discourse was general, as I determined, if I could help it, not to give her the least suspicion of my having any particular reasons for asking after her relation, but said, I was to go into the north the next day, and begged that when she saw or wrote to her, she would be so good as to pay her my compliments; and with this I took my leave.

My journey into the north was no pretence, for I had that day received news from my father of the return of the gout,
with

with which he used to be afflicted at times, and that he now apprehended it would settle in his stomach. He therefore desired by a special messenger (who had taken as much pains in finding me out, as I had in enquiring after my mistress) that he might see me once more before I went abroad, as it would probably be the last time. I had received his permission to travel, and had settled my remittances, and therefore was not a little surprized at this message: which I imputed rather to my mother-in-law's caprice, than my father's tenderness. But on my return home, I found him extremely ill, and confined to his chamber. Duty for so indulgent a parent as he had ever been to me, made me, without the least hesitation, comply with his request; which was, that I would not begin my tour till he was either better, or no more. A prudence suggested, that if I should be abroad at the time of his death, my mother-in-law might use the influence she had over him, to my prejudice. I determined then with myself to stay in England; and am very glad I did so. For though he was incapable of doing his son injustice, yet the provision he had made for my mother in his will, and the powers he had invested her with, were somewhat too large, considering his estate

was not clear ; and would probably have been much larger, had her artful, sly insinuations taken effect. She was a widow when my father married her ; never had a child by him, and had no near relations to provide for. The poor old gentleman lingered nigh three quarters of a year, (during which his lady was very tender and observant of him) and then died. Some difference broke out between us upon opening the will, which was not at all lessened by examining the steward's accounts, who, I found, in every thing paid an implicit regard to his lady ; for which, as soon as it was in my power, I gave him a discharge. She had made no small advantage of an estate, for many years entirely at her management ; and besides a jointure of 400l. a year penny-rent, I suspected that I was several thousand pounds the worse for her. The being confined to a very dull part of England in as dull a part of the year, by the death of so near a relation ; the menaces which were thrown out every day by my mother and her agents, of hampering me in a chancery-suit ; together with some other disagreeable circumstances usual on these occasions, made me resolve to quit the country, and go to town once more in search of my incognita.

I re-

I repaired again to the Lamb in Cheap-side, but could hear nothing further of the two ladies whom I saw at the play; only, that both were in the country, but not at the same place, and it would be some weeks before either of them returned to town. But walking one morning in the mall, my servant called after me very hastily, "Sir, Sir, I am sure by her voice, here is one of the ladies, and perhaps her companion is the other; they are both at the end of the Bird-cage walk." I ordered the fellow to come after me, and make as little noise as possible. We followed them unperceived, and I overheard Miss Fanny say to her cousin (for it was she) "are you for the play to-night, or not?" The other answered, "By no means; you remember, (continued she) the last time we were at the play together, I was ill used by an impertinent fellow, who thought his dress gave him a license to insult modest women; though he altered his stile in a little time, and took me for a person of fashion. You know, I let the fool lead me to the coach, that I might get rid of him fairly: but I was so vexed, that if any man would cane him heartily, I could almost chuse to marry him for such a piece of service." Lord bless me, (interrupted her companion) I quite for-

got to tell you, that the person you mention was at our house after you were gone, to beg pardon for what he had said, and —Here, I came up, and making a low bow, told the ladies I was come to give them satisfaction upon the man who had affronted them. The alteration of my dress occasioned their not knowing me at first; but a modest blush overspread the face of my incognita, and we soon recollected each other. Her cousin relieved her from her confusion, by saying, that she must take the blame upon herself, for not having made the gentleman's peace some time ago; and that it was now her turn to ask pardon for the neglect. She concluded with desiring I would do them the favour to drink tea with them that afternoon, when she did not doubt but matters would be set right between her relation and me. I said I should be very proud of the honour; and during the rest of our walk, gave them some general hints of my fortune and family, that they might not think me unworthy their acquaintance; and in short, behaved with as much awe and decency now, as I had done before with freedom and familiarity.

The good opinion they were both pleased to entertain of me in the morning, I took care not to lessen in the afternoon. Miss

Fanny

Fanny, presently after tea, left me alone with her cousin, to whom I vowed an inviolable affection, having been as much captivated with her conversation as with her person. She received this declaration with a sigh, lamenting that my regard was misplaced upon one who had nothing but her character to recommend her; and which alone would not, she said, make her worth any man's distinguishing. I replied, that I had fortune sufficient to make us both happy; and hoped, that if upon consulting her friends, they had no objection, she herself would have none to my continuing my addresses. She said, she had no other friends than the family she was with at present, and a very worthy gentleman who lived in the country. That her story was a melancholy one, and that if I wanted to hear it, Mr. Sergison would give it me; to whom she had been so much obliged, that though he was no relation, she could not think of disposing of herself without his consent. I told her, that I was not at all curious to enter into a detail of her misfortunes; but whatever they were, I should think myself infinitely happy, if I were destined to put an end to them, and from that hour my hand and heart were at her service, and should wholly be employed to that purpose. I
then

then went to my lodgings, but returned the next day, communicated my design to the gentleman, his wife and daughter, and engaged them all three in my interest. In a month's time I had made a great progress; for the good people in the house, finding my intentions were sincere, and my affection entirely disinterested, had drawn from her a confession that she loved me, and would never marry any other man. I was determined to make a proper use of this, and that nothing should defer our happiness any longer; so named a day for our marriage, to which (after some reluctance) she agreed."——Mr. Bevil having brought the history of himself and our young friend thus far, the whole company congratulated them both upon this happy event. I make no doubt, my good friend, of your joining in the general joy, at the fortunate turn this dear girl's affairs have taken; and am, with the truest and most ardent wishes for the continuance of yours and Philander's happiness,

Your ever faithful

SOPHRONIA.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XV.

To the same.

TH E next day, all the good company at Aspasia's were by invitation to dine at our house, when the old method was pursued, of assembling some hours before dinner, and entertaining ourselves in the manner you have heard. Sir Harry told Mr. Bevil, that having brought his history to the usual period of all love stories, a wedding; he supposed the company were to expect no further account of his affairs. That is just as the company pleases, returned his friend; for unless you are tired, what followed my wedding, may perhaps engage your attention as much as any thing that preceded it. We then begged he would favour us with the remainder of his story, and he went on thus.

“ As I had not a very large acquaintance in town, and my wife yet less, we were seldom troubled with visits upon our nuptials, and I was in hopes to have escaped the notice of the news-writers. But I was mistaken; for an old friend and fellow collegian found me out by the circumstance of seeing me in print on this occasion, and came to wish me joy. I had not

not seen him of several years, and found that he had taken orders since he left college; which led me into an enquiry after his situation and preferment. He told me he had been married but a little while himself, to one Miss Vincent, who brought him a good fortune (besides a living he had been presented to through her father's interest) and reckoned himself very happy in his family and circumstances; few people that set out so early in life, having met with so good success. I was extremely pleased with this account, and begged that we might see each other often during his stay in town; and having learned where he lodged, we generally met once or twice a week, and carried our ladies with us. One evening as we were all together, somebody knocked at the door, and desired to speak with him. Upon his going down he was told, that the minister of the parish and his curate being both out of town, a woman in Coleman-street, that was extremely ill, and it was thought lay at the point of death, begged that some clergyman would visit her. His humanity made him immediately comply with her request; and after a short apology for leaving his company, and a promise to return in about an hour, he took his hat and followed the messenger. Three hours were elapsed

elapsed before we heard any thing of him, or knew certainly where he was; when there came a short note to his lady by a porter, in these words. "My dear, I am very well, and will return home as soon as I have dispatched an affair of consequence; the particulars you shall have when we meet, for I cannot stay now to explain it: mean time, do not frighten yourself nor your friends. I am, &c." Cheapside, 20 minutes after 12." This note a little comforted the poor lady, and lessened our uneasiness, though it could not wholly remove it. Mrs. Bevil and I offered to stay with her till the morning, and wait the issue of this affair; but she said, it was quite unnecessary to trouble her friends, as the whole night would only be taken up in breaking our rest by fruitless conjectures, which could give no satisfaction to any of us. She hoped she had sufficient stock of courage to support her spirits till her husband's return, and therefore begged we would not think of sitting up any longer. If any thing extraordinary happened, we should be sure to know it as soon as she knew it herself. We left her upon this, not without commending her resolution, and promised to be with her again the next day.

Our

Our impatience to know what it was that detained my good friend so long from his company, and our concern for his safety, were both too great to suffer us to take any rest, and we had called a coach very early in the morning, intending to drive to his lodgings; when just as we were stepping into it, Mr. Sergison's footman arrived with a message that "his master desired to speak with me and my lady, immediately." I asked the fellow, whether his master's business was very urgent? He replied, that he was bid to tell me, it was of the greatest consequence, and hoped I would make no delay. Leaving word therefore where we were to be found, in case of any enquiry after us, we drove to Mr. Sergison's, and were let in by Miss Fanny, who conducted us up stairs with a countenance full of joy and pleasure. "Sir, (says she to her father) here is the dear creature; put her out of her pain as soon as you can." And me too, (added I) by informing me, if you know, where my good friend is, who parted from us last night, and gave us so much uneasiness. He is at home, replied Mr. Sergison, with his lady, and very well. He left me about two hours ago. Mrs. Bevil then asked what brought him thither? "Your affairs, my dear," said he. Pray, Sir, what could

could he know of my affairs? "But little, I confess; though he has let me into more than he knew himself. Please to seat yourselves, and I will explain."

Just as the clock struck twelve last night, a coach stopped at my door. "If you are sure you have not mistaken the house, friend, says a gentleman to the coachman, stay half a quarter of an hour and I shall want you to carry me back to the place from whence you came." I was not yet gone to bed, being always the last person in the family that does, and heard the fellow say, "he was sure he was right." Before he could knock at the door, I opened it myself, and was asked by a clergyman, whether my name was Sergison? I answered yes, and desired him to walk in, and let me know why I was favoured with so late a visit from a gentleman I was an entire stranger to. He said, he had been with a sick woman in Coleman-street, who expressed a great desire to see me, having something of importance to communicate to me; and if it were agreeable, he would get into the coach and accompany me thither. He begged the favour of a pen, ink, and paper, just to write a line to his wife, who had some friends to spend the evening with her, that would be uneasy if they

they did not hear from him; as he had supped at home, and was called away from his company. I awakened the porter who plies at my shop, and was asleep upon a bulk in the street, dispatched him with the gentleman's note, and then we both got into the coach.

Upon our arrival at the sick person's, we were told she was then in a fainting fit; and were obliged to stay some time before she came to herself again. When she was capable of being understood, she desired that I would come near her bedside, and then asked me, in a dying voice, whether I remembered her: I said, after some hesitation, that I could not recollect her by any means; and she not making any reply, the clergyman and the landlady, supposing that their presence might be some restraint upon her, withdrew and left us alone. The door being shut, "You see before you, Sir, says she, Hannah, that lived with your brother Nash, the apothecary, above twenty years ago." I then immediately recollected her, and desired her to proceed. "My life (continued she) has been very irregular, both before and since that time; as I have confessed to the worthy gentleman that left the room just now."—Here I interrupted her, and desired to know
what

what particular offence she had committed against me or my relations ; and she went on — “ You remember the fire no doubt, Sir, that happened while I lived at Mr. Nash’s, and a child being brought to his house that was snatched out of the flames. I was the person that carried it thither ; but in the way could not resist the temptation (for which God forgive me) of stealing a picture from its neck, enamelled, and set in gold.” A flood of tears in this place burst out, and it was several minutes before she could resume her story, to which I was very attentive, and comforted her as much as I could. “ I was so intent upon my theft (continued she) that I did not observe the fire had actually got hold of the babe’s cloaths, and scorched its leg, for I was all the while busied in untying the ribband that fastened the picture to its neck, having no knife about me to cut it. At last I got it off, and the cloaths being of little value, I thought the best way to prevent any discovery, was to strip the child stark naked ; tho’ it was a cruel cold night, and I had to carry it through several streets. I left my master’s service presently after, being turned away upon suspicion of dishonesty, which, to my sorrow and confusion, I must own to be true. I have it not in
my

my power to make restitution to those I have wronged, nor can I produce the enamelled picture, having pledged it to my landlady for eight weeks board; which I shall never be able to pay, so am afraid it is disposed of." Here she renewed her tears, and desired the gentleman who visited her, would give her some more of his counsel and advice. I took the opportunity whilst he was with his penitent, to talk with the landlady about the picture; and promised, if she would trust me with it, to give her the full value, and satisfy her for the poor wretch's board. She consented very willingly to put it into my hands. By great good fortune it was still in the house; she fetched it, and I left seven guineas with her, being all the money I had about me, with a promise to defray what further charges she should be at on her lodger's account. The gentleman and I then came away in the same coach that carried us thither, and at my door we parted. I found my family up when I got home, though it was not above four or five o'clock; and my wife and daughter were very eager to know what had kept me out all night. I shewed them the picture, (which appeared to be one of Zinckes's, highly finished) and asked them if they had ever seen any
body

body like it? They could not say that it resembled any gentleman of their acquaintance; but both of them agreed, that, though a man's face, it bore a great likeness of Mrs. Bevil. I replied, it was doubtless her father's. But pray Sir, said Fanny, how came you by it?" That, I told her, she should know at a proper time, if she would suspend her curiosity at present; for I was so very sleepy and fatigued, that I must lie down for an hour or two.

As soon as I awaked, I sent my servant desiring both your companies. But my idle girl, imagining that I had made a full discovery of Mrs. Bevil's parents and family, and intended nobody should disclose it to her but myself, called out as you came up stairs, in the manner you heard, "Pray Sir, put the dear creature out of her pain." I heartily wish, madam, it were in my power; for I love not my own child with a truer affection than I do you. In the mean time, be pleased to accept of this portrait; which may by some providential turn, bring you to the knowledge of your father, as I am satisfied it was done for him, though I cannot recollect that I have ever seen the face."

My

My wife would have fallen upon her knees to the worthy man to express her gratitude, had he not prevented her. I make no doubt, dear madam, said he, that there are further blessings in store for you, besides the being so happily disposed of in marriage, as I thank Heaven you are, and I have lived to see. That Being, who is the father of the fatherless, will rather increase than withdraw his favours from those who have remembered him in the time of their youth.

His lady and daughter were repeating their kind wishes for their friend's happiness, and embracing her with the greatest tenderness, when I mentioned the uncertainty the good folks must be under, with whom we supped the night before, to know what was become of us. Mr. Sergison said, that he would not part with the clergyman till he had promised to come and dine with him that day, and to bring his lady; (having learned whilst they were in the coach together, that he was an intimate acquaintance of mine,) and that he would engage me and my wife to meet them. Accordingly they came, but we did not sit down to dinner till between five and six. We had agreed not to mention any thing to them of what had happened, as it might throw a cloud
over

over a conversation that would otherwise be chearful; and after a very agreeable evening, we went home to our lodgings.

The Monday following, as I was preparing to set out on a visit to my good friend Sir Harry, I was served with a sub-pœna from the court of chancery. A billetdoux of this nature I knew could come from nobody but my mother-in-law; and upon opening it, I found it was at her suit. Innocence, which, when made to appear, will clear a man upon a trial at common law, avails him nothing in a court of equity. So, to shorten proceedings of this kind, I thought it the best way to wait upon the old lady, and by fair words, and some *reasonable* concessions, make up matters betwixt us, before we came to a hearing. Her business had brought her up to town, and she had taken a very handsome house in Jermyn-street, ready furnished. I waited upon her as soon as I could get dressed; sent in my name, and was introduced to her at breakfast. Her lawyer was with her, and immediately upon my coming into the room, saluted me by my name. I looked upon it as a good omen, that the person who was to be employed against me, was an old friend and fellow student at the Temple, where he had plied the law much closer than I

I had

had done, and had gained very eminent practice. He let me know immediately, that he should think himself very happy, if affairs could be adjusted between us without going to law; and offered his assistance towards ending the difference in so friendly a manner, that it would have been extreme folly either in the old lady or myself to have refused it. Finding her in an amicable disposition, we concluded at last, to put a stop to all further proceedings; at which neither party was sorry, and both agreed in applauding highly the generous behaviour of my friend. I found upon enquiry, that his circumstances set him above the necessity of doing any thing mean and dirty in his profession; for, besides a pretty estate of his own, and large business, he had had 4000*l*. with his lady, who was sister to my friend the clergyman's wife; and their father laid up a great deal of money every year, having no other children.

My mother-in-law was so very gracious as to invite me and my wife to spend the next day with her; though she had given out amongst her intimates but a little before, that "I had married an Abigail, without a shilling," and some other speeches, still more rude and injurious. Mrs. Bevil had heard of them, and was very loth to

go;

go ; imagining the good lady's kindness might relapse, and subject her to be insulted afresh. But I prevailed with her at last, after a promise, that upon the least disagreeable hint escaping her, we would immediately turn out of her house. So, when we had dressed ourselves out to advantage, we went in a couple of chairs to Jermyn-street.

Our reception was extremely civil and genteel. We were congratulated upon our marriage in as handsome a manner as both of us could wish ; and by the pains and expence taken to procure the most costly rarities for dinner, it was plain we were to look upon ourselves as no ordinary guests. The old lady was very conversible, and when we would have taken our leaves, pressed us to stay the evening. As I was willing to improve the good disposition she seemed to be in towards us, and knew, the more she saw of Mrs. Bevil, the more she would be pleased with her, I did not need much intreaty to stay, upon condition that we were to have no supper ; otherwise, I insisted upon going. Well, says she, if that be your resolution, that I may detain you as long as I can, I will give orders in your hearing for no supper, or what shall be next to none. And stepping to the bell,

my wife ran to touch it for her; but as they were returning to their seats, we heard something drop upon the floor, which the old lady being nearest took up, and found it was a picture my wife had let fall from her watch. Madam, says she, in a seeming surprize, may I be so free as to ask, whether this is a family piece? Knowing the confusion the dear creature used to be under on these occasions, I answered without the least hesitation, that it was done for Mrs. Bevil's father. "Her father! cried my mother-in-law, do you know Sir, what you are saying?" "I do, madam, and must acquaint you, that this picture was found fastened to my wife's neck when an infant at nurse; and by the resemblance it bears to her, I make no doubt is her parent's"—The words were scarce out of my mouth, when the old lady fainted away. We rang for the servants to fetch water and hartshorn, and with much ado brought her to herself again. As soon as she could speak, she clasped my wife in her arms, and cried, "Welcome my dear, my long lost child! Do not, Sir, impose upon me; for if the circumstance you mentioned be true, this lady is my daughter, and that the picture of her father, my first husband." I then begged leave to send for a friend of mine
who

who would remove her doubts, and confirm what she had heard; adding, that as yet, I knew but little of the history of my own wife. It was late, and the gentleman lived in the city; so I desired the favour of her coach to fetch him, which was readily granted. Whilst it was getting ready, I wrote a line or two to Mr. Sergison, acquainting him briefly with what had happened, and how necessary his presence would be to us at this juncture.

The reflection of having come to the knowledge of her parents in this surprising manner, and the ideas that crouded into her mind, were too much for my wife's spirits and she had well nigh fainted away, as her mother had done before. But the good lady soothed her with the utmost tenderness, and very prudently forbore entering into a detail of particulars, till Mr. Sergison's arrival. Only once, upon her daughter's craving to know what her real name was, she told her, *Lætitia Palmer*; that she was extremely like her father, "who, before he died, had several of these pictures drawn, and distributed among his relations; that as they might be dispersed in several parts of the kingdom, they might chance to be known to resemble one you had when you went to nurse. Your father put an advertisement into all

the news-papers with a considerable reward for finding you out; and after a fruitless enquiry, we both concluded you were lost in a dismal fire that burnt your nurse's house and a whole street to the ground,"

In a very little time the coach arrived with Mr. and Mrs. Sergison and Miss Fanny. On entering the room, the ladies made an apology for coming uninvited and undressed; but hoped my mother would excuse them, as they found it impossible to keep away upon hearing this agreeable news. She, on her side, received them with great satisfaction, and said she looked upon their visit as an extraordinary favour. I could not help remarking to myself what a sudden change the finding her daughter had wrought in the old lady; who seemed now to have found good-nature, affability, and many other qualifications, which she had either lost or mislaid. There was no getting Mrs. Bevil out of the arms of the Sergisons, for near a quarter of an hour. At last the father broke silence by congratulating her on this happy event, which he said was the subject of the daily wishes of his whole family, and which he all along believed would not be very remote. My wife then addressing herself to him, desired he

he would favour her mamma with every particular he could remember relating to her from her infancy. He did so, and gave her a very circumstantial account, which would have entirely removed every doubt in her mind, if there had remained any. The only mark of distinction, the enamelled picture, having been secreted ever since the fire by the wretched Hannah, it was impossible to know to whom the infant belonged; for (he continued) he well remembered the having read an advertisement about that time in the news-papers, and shewed it to Mr. Nash, concerning the picture, but the description of the child would have suited almost any infant. The search after the rest of the children (for several were claimed by their parents) was soon over, and in about a month's time entirely ceased, out of despair of ever recovering them. My sister advised with the minister of the parish about baptizing the little girl, who gave it as his opinion, that a child of above a year old, had probably been baptized already; but said, that in dubious cases the church had provided a form of words proper for the occasion, which if she desired, he would use. He did so, and I was her godfather. *Julia* was the name we gave her, being that of my sister; which I suppose may now be

I 4 changed

changed, it being no essential part of baptism, as the clergyman told us at her christening." Mr. Sergison having finished his account, my wife desired her mamma's blessing upon her knees, which she received, with congratulations of the whole company. She had likewise the pleasure to hear, that her original fortune of ten thousand pound had been so carefully managed, that it was now more than twice the sum. For soon after the misfortune of the fire, her father declining in his health, made his will, and left her so much money, if ever she should be discovered to be alive.

The generous care the good man had taken of a friendless orphan, the pains he had been at in forming her mind to principles of religion, and virtue, together with the expence of giving her a genteel education, demanded something more than bare acknowledgements, from a grateful temper. All this made her mamma insist upon his acceptance of what she put into his hand, as he and his family were taking their leaves; which on opening it, he found was a draught upon her banker for two thousand pounds. I had hinted to her before, that his circumstances were but moderate, and that though he had an estate, yet it was to revert to a distant relation

relation in case he had no son ; and Miss Fanny was the only child he ever had, or was likely to have. He would have returned it ; but the old lady stopped his mouth, by telling him, that her daughter's duty being how transferred from him to her, she thought it but just to give him a valuable consideration for it. Mrs. Bevil added, that were it ten times the sum, it could never sufficiently express her gratitude for the care and tenderness of all his family to a helpless orphan ; who first owed the preservation of her life to them, and of every happiness she had since been favoured with, Providence had made them the instruments. The coach having drawn up to the door, I handed the ladies into it, and Mr. Sergison followed, it being betwixt one and two in the morning ; but our old lady insisted that we should not stir out of her house, and that I should discharge my lodgings and live entirely with her. I did so, and we have been ever since a family of harmony. She is excessively fond of her daughter, and has offered to give me up her own jointure of 400l. a year ; but as she is an excellent steward, I shall insist upon her keeping it. As soon as I could settle some necessary affairs in town, I determined to seek out my friend Sir Harry Bellair ; and I think I

I 5

have

have now given him a sufficient reason, why I could not accompany him in his travels, as I intended. I had sent my man before with a letter to amuse you, determining you should have the recital of my history from no one but myself; and then my wife and I set out from London in my mother-in-law's coach, and two days ago it brought us hither. Here Mr. Bevil ended. The whole company were extremely pleased with his story, and assured him he might promise himself every blessing with so charming a creature as his Lætitia.

This young couple, my dear Amoret, seem to have a fine prospect before them. Tenderneſs and complacency, with good ſenſe on both ſides, will carry them through life, with joy to themſelves, and delight to their friends; and nothing but unavoidable miſfortunes can diſturb their union. Believe this truth grounded on experience, from,

dear madam,

your ever affectionate

SOPHRONIA.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

AMORET to SOPHRONIA.

I TOLD you, dear madam, in one of my former letters, that we were retired into the country, which till now has appeared to me as a place of banishment; but ever since through your assistance I have come to a right understanding of myself, I think it a paradise. I now get up in a morning, and sure there is no luxury like that of rising betimes. I breathe more freely here than ever I did in town: when I want company, there is a coach and six to carry me whither I please; and if I have any inclination to be dressed finer than ordinary, I have the happiness to belong to a gentleman whom I oblige extremely by doing so. I very often come into Philander's apartment, where I sit down to my work whilst he is at his Greek and Latin. He was the other day reading Homer in the original, often looking upon me with the book before him. I asked him why he did so, and told him I feared I was an interruption. He replied, he looked at me, to see whether the poet was just in his description of his fine ladies. "Of his

his goddeſſes, you mean, my dear, ſaid I, who are, you know of ſtill a ſuperior claſs to fine ladies ; I fancy Juno and a friend of yours are alike in ſome points, for I have read Mr. Pope's tranſlation." He returned, if the poet was remarkable for too ſtrong a fiction, it was certainly in her character. I answered ſmiling, " he could not ſo ſoon forget he had ſeen her picture ſomewhere in his travels ; but that the old gentleman had made the ladies ample amends in his *Andromache*." " You are right, madam, he rejoined ; and it is a ſufficient correction for my unpoliteness in reading Greek before a lady. She was an admirable wife indeed ; and though Hector entertained her in this language, yet it was her mother tongue, and he had not the ill-manners to fit muſing upon an author ſhe did not underſtand ;" and laid aſide his book immediately. He then ſhewed me he had (as you aſſured me) a thouſand qualifications, of which before I had no reliſh ; ſo that I hope you will call me to an account, if I give you any diſagreeable relation of my future conduct towards him. For ſince I have begun a cloſer correſpondence with my dear Sophronia, you muſt not think me troubleſome if I acquaint you from time to time with what paſſes within the ſhort compaſs
of

of my observation. Your letters are the rule of our living; and we act as near as we can the way of life you and your good friends lead at your house. The weather being finer than usual at this time of the year, we travelled more than one hundred miles last week, by very agreeable short stages, that we might enjoy the country, and see every thing worth seeing. For we often went out of the road, if any matter of curiosity presented itself, and paid visits to as many of Philander's acquaintance, as we came near; though we generally contrived it so as only to take an afternoon's refreshment of tea or coffee. Our equipage, viz. a coach and six, and two servants on horse-back, would have been too great an expence to any friend to be entertained at dinner. To avoid this, as the people we saw were chiefly gentlemen and ladies of moderate fortunes, we had our head-quarters at some good market-town, and from thence made our excursions.

One day, as we were upon the road, by some accident the hind wheel of our coach was broke, or out of order; and, if the servant, who was behind, had not called to the coachman to stop, we should have had a most untoward fall in the midst of a watering place. But the men alighting from their horses, took us out of our vehicle,

hicle, and carried us through the water before it fell, which it did very leifurely, and by that means received but little damage. A country fellow feeing our diftreff, ran away from us as faft as he could, which we thought very odd, when it would have been but kind to have affifted our fervants in raifing the coach. We all agreed in condemning the brutifh difpofition of the ruftick, but without reafon. For in a fhort time we faw him coming back to us with equal hafte, to let us know, that the minifter of the parifh, whom he had acquainted with our mifchance, had fent his chariot to carry us to his houfe, till our own equipage could be made fit for travelling. This was too feafonable a favour to be declined. So, when it came up to us, after having rewarded the country-man, and put our portmanteaus into the boot, we got into the gentleman's chariot, and in a quarter of an hour arrived at the houfe. The owner of it received us very genteely, and after he had handed me into his courtyard, looking very wiftfully at Philander, they foon recollected each other. It feems, they had been both of the fame univerfity, though not of the fame college, and were extremely delighted to meet with one another after at leaft fixteen years abfence,

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the gentleman being about ten years older than my spouse. Eusebio (for that was his name) led me into a pretty wainscoted parlour, handsomely furnished, which he said was his wife's drawing room, and begged I would be pleased to repose myself after my fright, till such time as she could wait upon me, and then retired. Philander and I in the mean time entertained ourselves with viewing as much of this pretty habitation as we could discover within doors. Over-against this drawing-room, cross a little passage, was another parlour, where the cloth was laid for dinner, with a sash directly opposite to one in our room, which looked into the garden, forming a pretty vista quite through the house. As we were busying ourselves in this way, there came in a little boy about three years old, led by his sister, a girl about seven, in a white frock. These were followed by another young spark of twelve, leading in a miss of about ten, or thereabouts, and last of all came in the gentleman himself with his lady. Her complexion had been better than it was, for she had been a great beauty, as we were afterwards informed; but the small-pox, and seven children, which she had had since, were enough to ruin a greater stock of charms than any belle was ever mistress

mistress of. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, she was still a fine woman, and had an inimitable sweetness in her smiles. She came up and paid me her compliments in a very engaging manner, and when I took notice of the pretty procession of the young gentlemen and ladies, she said, that when any company did them the honour of a visit, their papa always insisted upon the children's coming into the room in this manner. Whatever we could say to the contrary, they obliged us to spend the day with them; upon which I desired, if it would not break in upon their hours, that I might dress before dinner. Hearing this, the lady of the house, whom I will call Leonora, conducted me into her dressing-room, which was a pretty light closet, between two chambers, and might serve for either, because it opened into both of them. When we came down stairs, we found the gentlemen engaged at music in the dining-room. Philander played a thorough bass upon a spinnet, and Eusebio two or three solos upon the German flute. As we were admiring the performance, the little boy, who, poor thing, had done a long penance in sitting still, got off his seat, came behind Philander, clapped his little hands upon the keys, and would needs play too.

This

This set us a laughing, till his mama chid him, which made him cry, and put a stop to the performance till his maid came and took him away. After some little time the dinner was brought in, which was only two dishes of meat with the appendages; the table cloth and napkin were extremely white and fine. When we had dined, Leonora carried us into her drawing-room, where the discourse in general fell upon such topics as would admit of no opposition, such as the pleasantness of the weather, the pretty situation of their house, the neatness of the rooms, and their kind entertainment of us. The children were with us at tea, and formed a charming circle at the lower end of the room; till the little boy before-mentioned began to be very noisy again, at being corrected for putting his hands into the sugar-dish, and had like to have overturned the whole tea equipage. We begged the young gentleman might not be taken away, but his mamma, between chiding and laughing, ordered him to be carried prisoner into the nursery, from whence we could not procure his enlargement. Tea being over, the gentlemen proposed we should all walk out together, but I begged to be excused, as I found myself a little fatigued with my journey,
and

and told Eusebio, I had a great many questions to ask his lady, and designed to have her to myself till she had satisfied my curiosity. Saying this, I went with her into her dressing-room. When we were alone, I said, dear madam, I beg you would not think it impertinence, but pray be so good as to let me know your history and way of management with this worthy gentleman ; for I see such an amiable carriage between you, that I, who have been one of the crossiest wives in the world, am but lately come to a right understanding of myself. So that whenever I see others very happy in a married state, I am very solicitous to know the minute particulars of their management, that I may not omit little things ; which I am now convinced, greatly affect that of life, and make a man and woman more or less happy, as they are observed or neglected. She bowed to me and began as follows. “ I am the daughter, madam, of a gentleman, who, being a younger brother, was bred to the law. My mother, who was one of the greatest beauties of her time, was left a widow with only two daughters. I am the youngest, and at sixteen years of age, I began to be thought like my mamma, that is, said she smiling, a very great toast. Eusebio fell in love with

with me, but I coquetted it with him several years, and gave him inexpressible trouble. For as I thought my face would have made my fortune, I looked upon him as one thrown in my way to hinder my advancement, and could not endure him. As I was taken notice of by the principal Squires at balls and assemblies, I proposed to myself to chuse some very advantageous match; as all young giddy girls think; if a man says a civil thing to a woman's person, he is so much in her power that she may do what she pleases with him. I had a general admiration, but nothing else: and my mother dying, left me under the inspection of an aunt in London, who, for forty years past, had not been known to miss any public diversion, when her health would give her leave; for her husband was never consulted in any scheme. Under so experienced a governess I lost no time, but embraced all opportunities of extending my conquests. Whenever I saw a pretty fellow in public, I took an opportunity to express myself favourably of him before some of his acquaintance, and if that failed, I made him farther advances. For my precious aunt had instilled into me the principle of diversifying and suiting myself to all humours, for the sake of being admired and thought agreeable; so that I
had

had no less than five humble servants at one time, besides oglers and languishers at a distance. My uncle had no child; and besides being thought handsome, I had the reputation of being the heiress of a man who was rich, and could make me worth twenty thousand pounds any day he pleased. However, he was very close and tenacious, and I do not believe would have advanced five hundred pounds with me to any one person whatever. His countenance indeed, and whole aspect were sour and unpromising; like the soil of those countries where gold is found, which travellers tell us is always barren and unwholesome. My aunt having brought him great part of what he had, and being of quite a different turn, (for never were any couple more opposite) had a great ascendant over him, and more cash at her command than the wives of such people usually have; which occasioned many bickerings, but she always got the better. A young woman reputed worth twenty thousand pounds, cannot in London be long put to it for a husband. There are too many men of quality with encumbered estates, and too many Irishmen without any, to whom so considerable a sum is always acceptable. My good aunt entered into treaty for her niece with one of the former, who was of

too ancient a family, and too much straitened in his affairs, to marry for any thing but money. People of this stamp, as they seldom or never expect the love and inclinations of each other, are very rarely disappointed. I could not however, help comparing the addresses of this gentleman with those of Eusebio, and remembered the difference with regret. Matters were drawing towards a conclusion, and the wedding cloaths bespoke, when the match was broke off by a very extraordinary accident.

One day, whilst her husband was at his country-house, which was at some distance from town, and whither he usually went by himself; there having been a high quarrel between them about a month before, my aunt broke open his bureau and took out his will, of which she was executrix, and went in widow's weeds to doctors-Commons under a pretence that he was dead, and proved the same; by virtue whereof she received all the money he had in the stocks, and that very night embarked for Calais. I was then at Hampstead upon a visit to a lady of my acquaintance, and as we had the Daily Advertiser brought in every morning at breakfast, I read therein the article of my uncle's death. You may be sure my stay with my friend

friend was but short. I came to town immediately, and all the way flattered myself with the notion of being left worth twenty thousand pounds; when, upon alighting out of the coach, who should meet me at the door but my uncle himself. I was quite astonished, especially when he received me with great signs of displeasure in his countenance; and it was a long time before I could get out of him the history of his wife's elopement, as he concluded, very unjustly, that I could not be ignorant of the whole affair. I assured him that I never had the least suspicion of it, and was surprized he could entertain so ill an opinion of his niece; and that if he thought her privy to this transaction of her aunt's, he might next think she was aiding and abetting. Time, he said, would discover more than he could do; but begged I would please to remember that I was not *his* relation but his wife's; and that what expectations I might have had from him, were now entirely frustrated by this conduct of my aunt. I might think myself very happy, he said, that my own thousand pound was secure, by his wife's not having time to enquire after it, or not knowing in whose hands it lay. That I knew very well this was my whole fortune, the interest of which should begin to be paid

paid me from Lady-day next; for he could not afford to maintain me for nothing, and therefore should make a demand for my board. I was so extremely enraged at the old huncks, that I replied in great wrath, I would settle accounts with him that very day if he pleased. Which I did, and as I kept a journal of what friends I visited, and was often at the house of one or other of them two or three months at a time, I insisted upon a deduction for every absence, which with much ado was allowed. So after we had settled the ballance, I left him, and returned to Hampstead. I considered now that I was reduced from a twenty to a single thousand pound fortune, and that, in all probability, I should hear no more of my man of quality; in which I was not deceived, for he neither came near me, nor sent any message ever after. As I had never much affected his person or conversation, the loss of him gave me but little concern—not half so much as the unlucky accident that occasioned it. The lady whose guest I was, gave me a very hearty invitation to continue with her as long as it should be agreeable to me, which I thankfully accepted. Presently after I left my uncle's house, (as misfortunes rarely happen alone) I fell ill of the small-pox, and my face being entirely altered, I
thought

thought of leaving Hampstead, and returning to my native place in Berkshire; but my friend, who was thought handsome, and really was so, now redoubled her entreaties to me to stay with her. I believe, notwithstanding, that I should have left her, had I not received a letter from the most generous of men, acquainting me that he had heard what diminution both my beauty and fortune had suffered, and that as he was coming up to town to be instituted to preferment he had lately purchased, he should be glad of an opportunity to convince me that his regard for me had undergone no alteration: and begged to know where he might wait upon me. I appointed my friend's house, whom I had a mind to convince, that I still had it in my power, if I pleased, to marry the man I liked; and there, he repeated the offers he had made, and I was so silly as to refuse, some years before. In a word, knowing how much time we had lost, we soon fixed the day for our wedding, and kept it at Hampstead. We then took leave of my acquaintance, and set out for this place, where we have been for the most part ever since. Little variety is to be expected in the way of life we are in, and I am now so thoroughly reconciled to it, that I think the less there is, the better;

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as people meet with more accidents to disturb, than to please them. Though we married principally for love, yet you may gather from my story, that it was not upon a slight acquaintance; but I have often lamented the time I mispent at my aunt's, which would have been much better employed, in studying the temper and disposition of the man I was destined to marry. For want of a thorough knowledge of these, I own I struggled a long while with my husband for the mastery, but I found it was in vain. And upon a serious remonstrance from him, (not without some hints that I should make him desperate if I persisted in my unreasonable carriage towards him) that his profession required to have his mind be at ease; and that it was impossible for him to intend his studies and the care of his flock, if I unsettled him for the duties of his function; I resolved to give it up, and do every thing in my power to make a country solitude an agreeable retirement to him. As our income is but just sufficient to support our family in a tolerable way, good management is always necessary; and all pleasures that are not subservient to conveniency and keeping up a good esteem among our neighbours, are absolutely banished. At present we are very happy in our children;

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we have a small circle of friends within seven or eight miles, whom we generally see once a month. And as to our house-keeping, it is neither better nor worse than what you have done us the honour to partake of to-day, viz. a joint of meat and a fowl, such as happens to be in season. We have but little game, for as my husband has no taste for field sports, and goes but seldom among the Squires (who look with an evil eye upon all qualified persons not of their own fraternity) we find hares and partridges very difficult to come at.

Thus madam, I have given you a very dull narrative, of what I know by a great many will be deemed a very dull way of life; but as we have no expectations of being any farther promoted, the utmost of our ambition, (as there is no living in the world without a desire of some estimation in it,) is, to maintain the character we have acquired amongst our neighbours; to be satisfied with our situation; and to make some provision for our children. The sobriety of Eusebio, and his reputation for sufficiency with those of his own order, must make me think myself happy, as he is master of a great many accomplishments besides."

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I gave her thanks for the history of herself, and was going to make her some compliments upon it, when our husbands entered the room. Philander asked me whether my curiosity did not exceed that of all other people, for I had taken a most unreasonable time to satisfy it. I replied, that this lady's sentiments and mine were so much alike in every thing, that it was impossible not to be extremely inquisitive to know if there was any thing wherein we differed. What further passed whilst we staid with these agreeable people you shall know in my next letter, for it is high time to bring this to a conclusion; o I rest

Yours, &c.

AMORET.

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LETTER

LETTER XVII.

To the same.

AT supper the children made their appearance again, and after the cloth was taken away, all but the eldest young gentleman retired. As Leonora and I were motioning to withdraw, Eusebio said, it was not the fashion for the gentlemen and ladies in that country to part companies, and therefore he hoped we would stay. I answered, upon condition he would take his pipe, I would ; which I knew few gentlemen of his robe cared to relinquish. But he begged I would not think him so meer a country parson, as not to prefer the ladies conversation before any other thing whatsoever. " I have always been a declared enemy, continued he, to separate schemes of every kind. Men ought to be very cautious of excluding the other sex from bearing a part in any entertainment, and I believe this gradation to be very just—separate diversions, separate meals, and at last, separate beds. " I am entirely of your opinion, said Philander, and have often wondered

wondered at the ladies custom of retiring immediately after dinner. Sure some improvement might be had from their husbands discourse; who, if they are men of the least complaisance, will enter upon such topics only as their wives can bear a share in." You know, my dear, said I, that the conversation of men of learning usually runs upon subjects we can be no judges of. "Sir, rejoined Philander, turning to Eusebio, that is a rub upon your humble servant, who sometimes takes up a Greek or Latin book, when this lady is in his study; and if a friend has dropped in of the same taste, I own we have now and then been apt to forget a third person was in company." Lay the blame then upon your friends, said I; they are absent, and can bear it, for I intended no reflection upon any one present. Eusebio urged, that I had a right to object to this method of conversing before ladies; as it was one of the separate schemes we had just expressed our dislike of. At the same time, (he said) the avoiding all mention of what we had read, and keeping to ourselves the judgments we had formed of English authors and their writings, was treating women in too inferior, not to say, a contemptuous way. I told him, we were much obliged to him for

thinking us such reasonable creatures as to be entitled to any share of knowledge, how small soever. That that profound erudition many of his sex valued themselves upon, could not hinder their making a very awkward figure in company they affected to despise: and therefore it would be better to learn how to acquit themselves in a mixed assembly, than to be continually poring upon their books; and that as the professors of this kind of learning were of both sexes, if their lectures were properly attended, it would make great improvements in the literary world in less than a twelvemonth. Leonora then observed, that most of the new books she had looked into lately, though written by men of note, were upon very dry subjects, and handled in as dry a manner; and concluded with lamenting that we had not now one eminent poet left, though we had not been without one or more of the first rate for this last century. "Your observation, madam, says Philander, might be reckoned too severe, were any of the versifiers of the present age, or their advocates, within hearing. But it is certainly true. We have not, that I know of, one genius for epic, tragedy, nor comedy; nay, what is still more, for satire. There are indeed
now

now living, two or three young poets, who having raised our expectations by their first essay, have never been able to write up to it since." That is very strange indeed, cried Eusebio; for undoubtedly, these gentlemen had pieces of an inferior kind by them, which it would have been more prudent to set out with. Few shopkeepers shew the very best goods they have first of all; knowing, that customers are drawn in by degrees, as the price advances. Besides, this is inverting the order of Parnassus; most of our poets having improved in every performance, instead of falling off. Many instances might be produced of this, but I shall only mention Dryden; whose last works (his fables) excelled all that he had written before, though he was then turned of seventy. "Pray Sir, said Philander, if you were master of the ceremonies to the muses, how would you rank our English poets? for you cannot be ignorant, that great disputes have arisen concerning their right of precedence." I know it, answered he; and for that reason should not be at all ambitious of the post you have honoured me with. But if I were landlord of a public house, and the poets were to apply to me for a lodging, I would certainly provide, first a separate chamber for

Milton and Shakespear; who must be extremely delighted with one another, and have known what it is to lie two in a bed. Pope and Dryden should be in the next room, and you should ask which you please to walk in first; but pray let Prior follow immediately. The right of precedence with the rest of our bards, you might settle as you thought fit, or as they could agree among themselves. "I am very glad to hear, said Philander, that these authors have the same degree of merit with you, as they have with me; and find that they might expect good entertainment from so equitable a host—the trumpet in Sheer-Lane, I suppose, would be your sign; as it is a symbol of fame, and the very house where Bickerstaff kept a table for his heroes." "Have you no room for Addison, my dear, interrupted Leonora? One must be very arbitrary indeed to exclude such a man from any house, whether public or private." I should deserve to be turned out of doors myself, answered he, to attempt it. He was the most amiable and useful writer of his age; but inferior in his poetical capacity to those I have mentioned. I have indeed observed, with the utmost indignation, the injurious treatment his character has lately met with
from

from some very rough and dirty hands. "It is not difficult to guess whom you mean, said Philander; but were I malevolently disposed, I would not scruple to affirm any story I had heard, or chose to invent, of a person who had been dead thirty years. Every thing has its course: Addison's character as an author, is now it seems entirely sunk, and Dryden's is sinking apace—in the opinion of some late translators of Virgil." I have had the curiosity, replied Eusebio, to compare their performance with that of the poor neglected bard; and find their principal design was to avoid all expressions, nay, even rhymes made use of by Dryden; to shun the cadence of his verse, and every improvement a genius like his sometimes made upon his original; in short, to give us a translation that should not resemble his in any one particular: by which means, they have steered equally clear of Dryden and Virgil.

"Yet, I make no doubt, they have their admirers, said Philander." Ay, and a very formidable clan I will assure you, Eusebio returned.—I had, the other day, a packet of odes sent me by my bookseller, and it put me in mind of Swift's desiring Sheridan to send him a bundle of his boys exercises; which, I

suppose, like these, consisted of puerile descriptions of things that had been described a hundred times before. "Descriptive poetry, said Philander, is to me of all productions the most insipid, and this reason may be given for it, viz. that whilst the writer is employed upon the colouring, the sentiment stands still. Like the person whose picture is drawing; who, whilst the painter is at work upon what may be after all a bad likeness, must neither speak nor stir." There is a genius in the north, says Eusebio, who, in my opinion, under all the disadvantages of a bad climate, poverty, and blindness, has already surpassed every one of his contemporaries, and would leave them still further behind him, were any generous humane spirit to take him out of his obscurity. For what is very surprizing, though he has lost his sight ever since his infancy, he excells in images, which, according to the opinion of philosophers, could have no entrance to the mind by any other inlet. A phænomenon, it would be well worth their while to solve. "I was extremely well entertained with the specimen I saw (answered Philander) of that person's writings, and lament that I have as yet seen *only* a specimen. Besides the thoughts and imagery, as you observe,
being

being just and fine, his versification is very harmonious; and he has shewn a greater variety in his numbers than almost any poet before him, and they are all equally musical. "What pity it is!"——I ask pardon for interrupting you, my dear, said I, but do you consider that we are to rise early, and travel a great way? The clock having struck twelve some time, Leonora and I took our leaves, and the gentlemen, after they had finished their bottle, came to us.

Our accommodation above stairs was equally neat with that below; and when we fell asleep, nothing could be more so, for neither of us awaked till eight the next morning. When the servant came in to light the fire, I asked if her lady was stirring, and was answered that she had been up above an hour. Philander was soon dressed, and went down to Eusebio, and as I was putting on my riding habit, Leonora entered, and begged me not to think of going, for she had received a present by the coach from London, that she intended for my dinner that very day, and she had already obtained Philander's promise to stay and partake of it. She pressed me in so pretty a manner, that I laid my habit aside, and put on my night-gown. Nothing remarkable passed at breakfast. Eusebio told

told us there was an assembly at a town six miles off that night, and proposed our going thither, which was agreed to. At dinner Leonora shewed us, that she had by no means neglected the inspection of her family affairs, by the orders given to her cook; for I never saw house-lamb or fresh salmon better dressed in all my life. The plate and linnen perfectly neat, and the servants very clean and decent. We sate some time after dinner, and our coach being now refitted for travelling, was ordered to the gate. As we went down the court-yard to step into it, we heard a pistol go off, and presently after two more, which surprized us extremely; and before we could recover that surprize, we were alarmed with the noise of a larger gun, which Philander said, he was sure was a blunderbuss. This last frightened our horses so much, that the coachman could hardly keep them from running away; and the discharge of the guns we heard was so close, that we thought it was just over the hedge. Whilst we were all in the greatest amazement, Leonora proposed to run back again into the house, for fear we might be in some danger. But the gentlemen resolving to continue without, till they could make some judgment of this extraordinary accident;

cident, we staid with them, but hung upon their arms, not without shedding a great many tears, which the apprehension of their being in danger occasioned. All this time the horses were curvetting and prancing, that though the fellow drove them about a hundred yards gently to quiet them, yet as often as they came up to us, they were in the same disorder, and would not stand still in the least. This was a new vexation; and we thought ourselves in as much danger from them, as we were before from the pistols. While this was doing, there came a servant in a blue livery, full speed down the road, and when he saw us, in the greatest fright imaginable begged we would receive his lady an hour or two, who was coming in a chariot and six, but was so often swooning, that he feared she would scarce live till she arrived hither. Before we could say any thing more than to assure him of the lady's welcome, he rode away back again with the same speed he came. This accident, and the fright of the horses, stopped our going to the assembly, so that Leonora and I went in to expect this swooning lady. In less than half an hour she came. Her chariot was a very handsome one, neatly painted and gilt, and hung in the newest taste. Four of the horses
were

were very fine bays, but the two leaders but indifferent and not of the same colour with the rest. Philander and Eusebio took her out of the chariot, for she was in a swoon and had certainly been lost, had it not been for a young woman that supported her, and kept her in her arms from falling. A chair was brought, and the lady put into it, where she continued some time without opening her eyes. But by the application of hartshorn and other spirits, with difficulty we recovered her so well as to enable her to walk into the house with very little support. When she came into the drawing-room, she fell into another fainting fit, which gave us fresh disorder, and encreased our curiosity to know who she was, and the occasion of her illness. Her dress spoke her a person of consideration, and one of her ruffles was very much torn, which seemed to imply that some violence had been offered to her. Therefore as Leonora was engaged with her, I asked the young woman who came along with her to give me some account of the affair. Judge what my surprize must be, to find as soon as I looked at her earnestly, that the person I spoke to was my own maid, dressed in a blue camblet riding habit trimmed with silver. She told me she had followed

me thither to ask my pardon for marrying without my consent during my absence. But that an advantageous match offered which she could not refuse, being a tenant's son of Philander's, who was heir to one hundred pounds a year. As her husband and she came along designing to overtake us, we heard (continued she) the noise of guns going off, and my spouse, notwithstanding all my entreaties, rode towards the noise as fast as he could. I was forced to follow him, fearing else to be left alone. When we came up, we saw this lady striving with a man very well dressed, who had opened the chariot door, and I thought seemed to be pulling her out. Then my courage was rouzed, and I bid my husband go forward and save the lady. Immediately he drew a pistol from his pocket, and bid her servants not be such cowardly dogs, but fire in their lady's defence, or he swore he would fire upon them. Hearing this, the man at the coach-door who was dragging the lady, quitted her and mounted his horse, drew a pistol and fired at my husband, but very providentially missed him. However, he returned the compliment, and the shot went through the gentleman's hat. Upon this he turned his horse, in order to leave us, and as he was spurring to get him

him forward, he had not got above thirty yards when the servant behind the chariot shot at him with a blunderbuss, upon which he fell. The lady shrieked and swooned immediately. The servants then begged me to get into the chariot, which I did, and supported her as well as I could till we got hither. What became of the wounded party I cannot tell, for I was wholly taken up with my patient. —

I was mightily rejoiced to see Molly, and saluted her with great pleasure ; and whilst the lady was bringing to herself, she delivered me your two last letters, (which had been left at our house) containing the surprizing revolutions in Julia's fortune, the second concluding with a very *useful hint*. I have not time at present to thank you for every particular, but join with you sincerely in the joy you express at our young friend's happiness, and wishes for its continuance. Philander will write his compliments to her next post, if she still remains in your neighbourhood. I must reserve the story of the frightened lady for my next letter, and put an end to this by assuring you, that,

I am,

dear madam, &c.

LETTER

LETTER, XVIII.

WHEN the lady was fully recovered from her swoon, she rose up from her seat and surveyed all the company in the room, which made us take particular notice of her eyes; and in spite of the langour with which they were overcast, I thought them the finest I had ever beheld. She then threw herself again into an easy chair, and burst into a flood of tears, drew out a cambric handkerchief and held it to her face to receive this discharge of her over-burthened heart, and sobbed to the greatest degree. She was at length, with much difficulty, prevailed with to drink a glass of water with some drops in it; but all this while she was silent. Leonora begged her to be pacified, assuring her that she was now out of all danger; and believed it would be a considerable relief to her to acquaint us with the occasion of her disorder. Oh! madam, says she, you see here the most unfortunate of women, and then burst into a new fit of sorrow.—She desired her servant might be dispatched to the wounded gentleman, that his funeral might

might be taken care of, for he was a person of good fashion; too good, said she, sighing, for such enterprises as these. How shall I ever be able to look any of his family in the face, when this unhappy man came by his death thro' my means? and then she cried again as much as ever, and we feared was going to faint once more. But at that instant her servant, who, of his own accord, had returned to the place where this encounter happened, came in and brought word that the gentleman was not wounded, only his horse was killed under him by that shot. That a chaise and six horses, which waited for him in a narrow lane, drove up to him and carried him off. Ah! she cried, what a narrow escape? That chaise was designed for me. Leonora and I then hoped she would be easy, since there was no hurt done only to the horse, and the gentleman himself was safe, whom we perceived by her concern, she had some tenderness for.—None in the least, she replied, only on account of the lady of that unworthy man, whose life ought to be forfeited to the law; for no considerations of honour or virtue could restrain him from the basest actions. Then, after making a thousand apologies for the trouble she had occasioned, she said, as soon as she could

could a little recollect her spirits, she would tell us the whole affair. Tea and coffee were then proposed, and after the servants were retired, Leonora said, she imagined that would be the properest time for the lady to tell her story, which was consented to.

But first she returned her thanks in a very genteel manner to Molly and her husband, for their kind assistance, and said, that if it had not been for that gentleman and his lady coming by that instant, she had been made the most miserable of women, for that they had not only saved her honour but her life. All these expressions served to no purpose but to excite our curiosity, which she gratified at length in the following manner.

“ I am the wife of a gentleman of good family but small fortune, who is nearly allied to several persons of quality, among whom for two years last past, he and I have spent most of our time. This last summer, my husband being gone a journey upon business, I staid nine or ten weeks with lord and lady Grandmont, who have only one daughter, one of the best women in the world, and married to a gentleman of 3000l. a year. One night at a ball (which we usually had every week)

week) this gentleman would dance a minuet with me, and at the end of it slipped a paper into my hand. I was amazed, and still more so when he gave me a most languishing look. But being unwilling to make any disturbance, I put the note into my pocket. This affair wholly spoiled my diversion, and the young lady in particular took notice of it, and asked me if I was not well, and was more than ordinary solicitous about me. But I could not get up my spirits, and was very thoughtful the whole evening. When the country dances began, the gentleman would needs have me for his partner. I did not know how to refuse him, because it might affront his lady; though as yet I had not seen the contents of the note, and so submitted, as I may call it, to dance with him. For a person of virtue and honour is so much above another that has neither, that I think I am not guilty of ill-manners when I say I submitted to be the partner of a man of 3000l. a year. But before we had finished two dances, I received such numberless squeezes by the hand, and whispers at the lower end of the room, that I industriously made a false step and pretended I had sprained my ankle. This gave great uneasiness to his lady; but I begged

begged of her to let me retire, and the servant and I would take care of my foot, which I apprehended was not so much hurt but that resting in bed would perfectly cure it. By this means, after limping to my chamber I had an opportunity to read my billet, which as near as I can remember was in these words :

“ My charming Dorothea, it is impossible to live without you ; I will sacrifice every thing in the world to convince you of the greatness of my affection. Let me alone to contrive opportunities to settle all affairs, which, if your heart is as tender as mine, will impatiently close with, madam, your faithful adorer, &c.” Nothing could surprize me more. Here was an overture to me to be false to my husband, expressed (as all such overtures ought to be) in false English ; however, the squire’s meaning was pretty plain. As I was in no want of either his money or his passion, I considered with myself what he could discover in my conduct that could give him encouragement ; for, as to my person, his lady had greatly the advantage of me. It was pity she should know it, I thought, because I had the highest esteem for her. At last it came into my head, that it might be some slight gallantry he had taken up for his own and
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the company's diversion. Presently the maid came in, and I went to bed, but had a very unquiet night. When I came down to breakfast the next morning, he was there and had been mighty solicitous about me. I took all opportunities of shewing him the utmost indifference, (but in such a manner as the company should not perceive it) kept constantly with his lady, and paid her more than ordinary distinction, to let him see he was mistaken. But when we were going up to dress, he told his wife he wanted to speak with me, if I could be spared. Upon which, be so kind, madam, (says she, with the utmost sweetness) to stay with Mr. ——— and I will wait on you presently. So! thought I, now I shall have it. He then shut the door; and I asked him what he meant? He put on a very amorous air, but had so much villain writ in his face, that had I been disposed as he wished me to be, of all mankind he would never have been my choice. He repeated what he had said in his letter, and had the assurance to tell me he designed me for his wife, and made his addresses to his lady only to get into the family where I was, and was prevailed with, by her fortune, to marry her; but that I had his heart though she had his person. It is

is needless to tell you all he said. I replied, he must have a very despicable opinion of me, to think I would pay the least regard to this declaration. But I had that great honour for his lady, that if he would promise to trouble me with no more billets or addressees, I would pass over all this,—and if he persisted in it, I would expose him to all the world; for I did not use to be so insulted. I added, that so long as he behaved to his lady like a man of honour, I should be silent; but if otherwise, it may be proper, Sir, to let you know, that if it were possible I should ever depart from my affection to the best of husbands, you would be my aversion, therefore I leave you to consider the consequences. Immediately I left the room. He muttered something between his teeth, and I went up to my chamber and dressed me for dinner. I thought it would be best to say nothing to my husband about this affair when I saw him, for fear of ill consequences, and determined not to mention it to him when he returned, which I expected would be in a few days. At dinner my gallant behaved with so much unconcern, such hypocritical fondness to his lady, that I could, with great pleasure, have boxed his ears. As soon as the cloth was taken away, he told me,
before

before all the company, he would make me a present of a gold snuff-box, and at the same time drew a very fine one out of his pocket. But I replied, with some uneasiness in my looks, that I never received any presents from gentlemen. Upon this his lady said, I should not lose a present for a punctilio, and snatching the box from him, desired me to accept it as her gift. I refused it, till she said I should offend her to the last degree if I did not take it; and forced it upon me. My heart was ready to burst, when I found myself obliged to receive any thing that came from that odious man; and feigning a pretence to retire to fetch something I had left above stairs, I opened the box, and, to my very great astonishment, found another billet inclosed in it. I recollected now, that he looked horridly confused when his lady took the box to give it me. I now saw that he was determined to carry his point; for this second note complained of my cruelty, ending with a declaration that he must succeed, though at the hazard of his life, for he was a miserable creature without my making him a suitable restore of affection. I then resolved to return his present as publicly as he gave it, with my reasons for so doing; but the reflection on the misery it would occasion in a
worthy

worthy family, made me alter my mind. I wished heartily for my husband's arrival, (who had desired me to continue there till he came back) that I might get away. In the mean time, I never would suffer my gallant to speak to me alone ; and when in company, gave my conversation a particular cast, and filled it with allusions to what nobody understood but himself, and treated him with as much contempt as his behaviour deserved. So that what between rage against me, and an over-acted fondness to his lady, I am persuaded he felt pain enough, and I do not know but I might sometimes pursue my revenge too far. At last my husband arrived ; and though I love him entirely, I made use of him to plague the wretch still more. I told him, that Mr. ——— would set him a pattern that all married men ought to copy : that he was so extravagantly, and at the same time, so deservedly fond of his lady, that I envied her ladyship nothing but that part of her happiness ; and though, says I, my dear, I have no reason to complain, yet as the best of you are capable of improvement, I would have you follow that gentleman's example. The diversion I continued to make myself at his cost,

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was, I dare say, the reason for his last attempt. For one morning as my husband and I were talking very earnestly in the summer-house, he said he must leave me the next day, and desired I would follow him. That his business required some expedition, and therefore he begged I would hire a pair of horses and clap to the four we had of our own, and I should go with him to the place where he was engaged; for he could not think of parting with me again so soon, after so long an absence as he had been obliged to make. He then appointed the hour and place of our meeting, and went away. I followed him instantly; and as I stepped out of the summer-house, thought I heard the soft treading of somebody on the other side of the garden-wall, and had a short glimpse of my spark stealing off upon tiptoe, till he thought he was out of danger of being heard, and then he ran down one of the covered walks as fast as he could, to get into the house before me. My husband went away the next day, and had appointed me to follow him two days after. Accordingly, when the time came, I took my leave of lord and lady Grandmont, and the other ladies. At
going,

going, this wretch would needs lead me to my coach, and squeezed my hand so intolerably hard, that it benumbed my fingers for some time after ; and as I drove away he gave me one of his dying looks, but I only bowed very carelessly to him, on his wishing me a good journey. At the next town I hired a pair of horses, and made my footman provide a blunderbuss, and a brace of pistols, which the coachman was to carry with him, and in this manner I travelled till the last stage. When I got up this morning I dressed me as you see ; and having met with no interruption in the journey as yet, my mind was wholly disengaged and perfectly easy, thinking of the dear person I was to meet, (my pride not a little gratified by travelling in such state) when the chariot stopped all on a sudden, and this wretch appeared at the door. He was dismounted, held his horse in his hand, opened the door, and with a great deal of complaisance said, he was uneasy to know how I did, and had followed me on purpose through the anxiety that so fine a woman should travel with so slender a defence. He said, he had heard that one of my horses fell lame (which was true) and that he had a chaise

at my service to carry me to my journey's end, if I would do him the honour to accept of it; and with these words took hold of my hand, as it were to help me out. I gave a great shriek, when he immediately drew a pistol and swore there was no more dallying with his passion, and began to lay hold of me. I kept my seat notwithstanding, but durst not cry out for fear of his pistol. — I see he has torn my ruffle, what had become of me, God knows, if this gentleman had not come so fortunately to my assistance. For my fellows were so stupid as to look on without once offering to help me. Then it was that he mounted his horse, giving me some hearty curses, and discharged his pistol at my defender. The rest you all know, and I am heartily glad he was not killed, and wish it may frighten him from the like attempts again. Whilst he courted his lady, he had such a gloominess in his aspect, that I have often wondered she could entertain any favourable thoughts of him; and his behaviour since has shewn I was right in my judgment.

Here she paused, and we returned her thanks for her relation. She then told Molly, if she would not take it amiss to offer

offer her what she had before declared she had such an aversion to, she must beg of her to accept of that snuff-box she had received from him. I have another, added she, so very like it, that his lady when I next see her will not find out the difference. The girl accepted it very gracefully, and expressed her satisfaction at having been instrumental in preserving her. The lady said, she was persuaded her servants must be bribed by him some way or other, or they could never be so tame to see her insulted in that manner, without attempting something in her defence. Molly's husband then offered to fish it out of them if it were possible, and went out of the room to make some enquiries.

Leonora then having learned that Dorothea was to meet her husband at that very town whither we were going to the assembly, said we should be time enough for it, and she should be under no apprehensions even though the lady's servants were corrupted. Which there was great reason to suspect they were; for when Molly's spouse came in, he told us they gave such confused answers to his questions, that he perceived they were guilty, and one of the maids saw the

coachman pull out a purse with several guineas in it. The footman owned the gentleman lay at an inn in the last town where is mistress lay; and upon examining the coachman's pistols the charge was drawn, though Dorothea had seen them charged herself. How the blunderbuss came not to be served in that manner, we could not tell, but it was very certain the fellow fired at the ravisher, and, as he owned in his excuse, (when he was told he had killed him) intimidated by Molly's husband. So that it appeared his design was laid deep, and he was determined to stick at nothing to gratify his passion, but was happily prevented. Then we all agreed to have the horses put to and go to the assembly together. One of the servants led Molly's pad, and she went into Dorothea's chariot. Leonora, Philander, Eusebio and I, went in our coach. Molly's spouse charged his pistols, and was our guard du corps. The evening was fine, and the roads so good that we got to the town by eight o'clock. At the inn where we put up Dorothea's husband was waiting for her, and expressed great joy to see her, telling her, he had been there two or three hours. She said, she was
unluckily

unluckily prevented keeping exactly to the time, and when she was at leisure would let him know the reason; but that we were all going to the assembly, and she had given that lady a cast in her chariot for the last six miles. So we alighted, and went together into a room till it was time to go, and after taking a glass of wine, our coaches carried us to the assembly, where there was indeed a fine appearance of gentlemen and ladies. Our partners were persons of the best families in the country, I mean Leonora's and mine; for Dorothea danced with Philander, and our other gentlemen plaid at cards. The company had done three dances and were going to begin a fourth, when Dorothea told her partner, if he pleased, she would sit down till the next, which he agreed to, and being retired to a corner she whispered to Philander, that she was sure her gallant was then in the room. At which, when he expressed some amazement, she said that he was that instant going about with a bowl of negus, disguised like a footman, and desired he would take notice of him, and make some enquiries of the master of the assembly-room who he was, and from whence he came. He did so, and brought

her word, that it being usual for gentlemen to lend their servants on these occasions, the landlord said, he had taken the liberty to borrow one or two attendants for that evening, as being more handy than any he could hire. That the person in question belonged to a gentleman who was not yet come, but would be here in half an hour; and hearing that there was a scarcity of waiters, voluntarily offered his assistance, saying he was sure his master would have no objection to it when he came.

The poor lady at this began to be frightened; but Philander comforted her with the assurance, that she was now in the company of friends, that no man alive should tear her from, and begged her not even to discover by her looks that she apprehended herself to be in any danger. She replied, that she could not promise for herself after what had happened, but however she would do her best. He then proposed that they should join the dancers. All this while the pretended footman was very busy in other parts of the room, but came near her as little as possible, and when he did, sidled off again immediately; which confirmed her suspicion that some other snare

snare was now to be laid for her, and put Philander upon contriving to hinder its taking effect. The dancers presently after formed themselves into separate parties to drink tea, and Eusebio and Dorothea's spouse being still engaged at cards, Leonora, she, and I sat down to a table with our partners, and had not drank a dish apiece, when Philander slipped out, and was gone from us above an hour. We sent after him several times, and began to be very uneasy at his long absence, especially when word was brought us, that he had not been in the house some time. At last he returned, and begged Dorothea in a low voice, to dismiss her fears, for that she was in no danger from any farther attempts; and as what she had met with already had been attended with no very bad consequence to herself, if he might advise, he said, not a syllable of it should be mentioned to her husband, as it might make him uneasy, and put him upon calling her gallant to account, which must end in a difference betwixt him and his lady. Accordingly, she promised that nothing of what had past should escape her lips; and the company beginning now to move off, we took our leave of her and her spouse

and left them at the inn, and the rest of us, except Molly and her husband, returned to Eusebio's, whither we arrived between two and three in the morning.

We did not rise betimes, as you may imagine, but as soon as we got to breakfast, Philander acquainted the company with the whole affair. He told us, that when we were at tea the night before, he went out and took Molly's husband with him, and desired to speak with one of the gentlemen's servants who had on the same livery with his master. By good luck the fellow was neither shy nor afraid, though they took him into a room by themselves, and double locked the door. They then got out of him, that his master's late attempt on Dorothea, was in consequence of a bet of a thousand pounds depending between him and a certain gentleman, who should *carry off* (the fellow expressed it in the terms of the agreement, which were very gross) three married women, within three months of the wager being laid; that two months were almost expired, and this was the first effort he had made towards winning the bet. Philander then asked him, whether there were no provision made to indemnify the aggressor in case of a prosecution

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at law? The fellow answered, "he had never heard there was, and that he believed those things never entered into the heads of gentlemen." To which Philander replied, it was highly proper then, that their servants should take them into consideration; and shewed how dangerous it was to live under such a master. The fellow said, "he believed his master was now very sensible of it, for he had assured him and the rest of his fellow servants, that nothing further should be done in the affair; and to convince them he was in earnest, he had shewn them two letters he had received that afternoon from lord *Eridle-goose* and captain *Driver*, importing, that the bet was laid aside, and the stakes withdrawn." Philander and Molly's husband having made this discovery, and rewarded the fellow for his intelligence, returned to the assembly and quieted Dorothea, whose fears were a good deal abated when upon enquiry it appeared, that the equipage, the owner of which was expected and did not come, was to leave the place immediately. She only begged of Molly and her spouse to lie that night at the inn where she and her husband set up, which they could not refuse,

refuse, but came to Eusebio's just before we sat down to dinner, and confirmed what Philander had been telling us, with this addition, that the gallant was decamped, and Dorothea set forward on her journey, without any likelihood of their meeting again. And thus the honour of a woman of virtue, the peace of a deserving man, and the happiness of a worthy family, were on the brink of being sacrificed — not to a brutal passion, which has frequently been too hard for all three, but to the genteel, polite, and reputable diversion of *Betting*. We took our leaves of Eusebio and Leonora this afternoon, after making our acknowledgements for the favours we had received; and they promised to return our visit.

I think now that I have sent you a longer letter than you ever wrote to me, and my excuse must be, that I could not help transmitting to you a particular account of so particular an affair.

I am, &c.

AMORET.

LETTER

LETTER XIX,
SOPHRONIA to AMORET.

YOUR letter, dear Amoret, found me at Sir Harry Bellair's, where I have been near a month. I communicated the contents of it to the good family, as soon as it came to hand; which surprized us all. And if it had been possible to get away, I would very gladly have gone to lady Grandmont's, with whom and her daughter I am perfectly well acquainted. But as that could not be, Eraſtus was ſo good as to undertake the journey, on purpoſe to be of aſſiſtance to that good family by way of advice, if it were wanted. For the affair itſelf is by no means a ſecret, and I fear will end unhappily. Aſpasia was giving us an account of ſomething like it, which happened when ſhe was at Bath. Three of theſe heroes, being, according to their own phraſe, in tip-top ſpirits; according to Milton, "flown with inſolence and wine," broke into a gentleman's lodgings and inſulted his lady very groſsly. The gentleman himſelf was abſent, but at
his

his return hearing what had passed, immediately commenced a prosecution against them. Two of them were made to pay pretty handsomely, and the third was lately hanged at Bologne for another attempt of this kind; the French, though a very lively people, having it seems no relish for this sort of wit, which is nothing else but a compound of mischief and absurdity, and the growth of our own country only. Sir Harry would have it, that the turn these gentlemen took, was owing to the climate, since we find nothing of it abroad; and that the same temper or constitution which made them the bane of their neighbours one part of the year, put them upon dispatching themselves in another. He added, that of the many bucks he had been acquainted with, few had died a natural death; and as it was the

“Sole strange purpose of their lives, to find
Or make, an enemy of all mankind,”

they had been considered by people of courage and resolution as beasts of prey, and treated as such; of which he produced several instances.

Since I wrote to you last, we have received accounts of her grace and Amanda, who were both brought to bed
within

within a few days of each other of two fine boys, to the great joy of two worthy families! His grace and Sir Thomas were both summoned to the meeting of the parliament, and left their ladies in the country while they attended the business of the nation. Politics, I know, were always a favourite topic with you; but surely you must now be out of conceit with them when they are become the jest of every body. Sir Thomas writes word among other things, that since it hath been removed from the hall up the stair-case, his clock hath done striking*; and he now consults only his stomach for the time to dine. As you have shewn by the late alteration of your temper, that you need no other advice about the way of life you are in, let me only mention one thing which I design to put in practice myself, and would recommend to all good wives in general, viz. the retrenching every unnecessary expence, that our husbands may be the better able to sustain the cruel, and almost insupportable, burthen of taxes we labour under; and which I fear, whatever some sanguine spirits may hope for,

* See page 22.

are neither likely to be lessened, nor applied to their proper uses. This grievance, every wife has it in her power to redress in some measure. For it is a melancholy thing to consider, that a man's education is merely to qualify him to get a livelihood, but a woman's, to dissipate it. Aspasia and her sister have already begun to introduce sumptuary laws in their own families; and the latter, upon Sir Harry's offering to present her with a new sett of diamonds for her hair, replied, that she was extremely obliged to him for every proof his regard for her, but hoped he would excuse her from carrying upon her head, what would amount to more than a year's income of his estate. As a certain gentleman's fondness for his lady upon their late reconciliation, has (as I have heard from other hands,) put him upon making her several very handsome presents, perhaps she may think proper to give a check to his generosity before it goes too far; if so, tell her that *this useful hint* is at her service.

Two days ago we were invited to a neighbouring gentleman's to partake of an entertainment upon his daughter's entering into her teens; and had the pleasure

pleasure of seeing a dozen or two of little folks dining together, from seven to twelve years old. Sir Harry says, that it is the custom of the country for the children to visit on their birth-days, (if they happen during a recess from school) which he approves very much, as it lays an early foundation for society and good neighbourhood. On these occasions, it seems, the young ladies themselves appoint the dinner, make all the jellies and sillabubs, and most of the sweet-meats, and choose their company. About four or five in the afternoon they go to dancing, when the eldest master takes out the oldest miss, and all of them are ranked according to their years. This prevents those idle distinctions of family, that instead of cementing, generally break off, an acquaintance; and of which children should not be suffered to have the least notion. As many of their parents as conveniently come, (and few care to be absent who can relish so pretty a sight) are entertained with tea and coffee in a room adjoining to the dancers, and frequently run out with the cups in their hands to give their little favourites a look; who meet with no interruption till ten at night, when the small assembly breaks up.

up. If you have never been present at it, you cannot conceive the pleasure arising from such a scene. Two more of these diminutive balls are expected in the neighbourhood whilst I stay here, and I design to be at both of them. Just as we were taking our leave, Sir Harry desired one of the young gentlemen might be brought to him, who seemed to be about six or seven years old, and was his godson. I saw him give the child money, (which the poor thing let fall whilst he was putting it into his breeches-pocket with his gloves on) and when he returned to us, he had much ado to conceal the tears that stood in his eyes. I suppose he was unwilling to disturb the thoughts of what we had seen with the relation of any thing melancholy, and therefore put on as chearful a behaviour as he could, during the remainder of the night; but the next morning at breakfast he gave us the following account.

“The little boy that came to me last night, is the son and heir of a very pretty young lady and a great fortune in this neighbourhood, who died about a twelve month ago. His mamma was a school-fellow of Sophia's, and lost her parents when she was about the age of my godson.

son. Unhappily for poor Eliza (for that was her name) she had not a relation in the world, generous, or disinterested enough, to undertake the care of her and her fortune, till she came of age. So by a strange fatality, she fell into the family of a second cousin of a third cousin of her mother's, a broken tradesman and a papist, who had married an old sybil that would stick at nothing for money. In these excellent hands she continued during her minority; when being a very pretty woman, and heiress to fifteen hundred a year, many advantageous matches offered, that were constantly rejected by her guardians (if I may be all owed to call them such) for this reason; that, being for the most part gentlemen of family and fortune, and thinking themselves upon an equal footing with their mistress, were determined to treat with none but principals, and thought every other application unnecessary. In this, however, they found they were mistaken. For the old people judging very rightly, that the whole they were to expect from a person not necessitous, upon his marrying their ward, would be, at the utmost, a handsome present of plate, &c. resolved to keep all such lovers at a distance,

ance, and admit only those that should make them far more substantial returns. By this means they had the entire management of her fortune, her coach and servants at their command, and maintained themselves very elegantly at her expence; not being under the least apprehension, according to the scheme they had formed, of ever being called to account. When any gentleman was refused, to whom her parents would have gladly married her, had they been alive, the fault was constantly laid upon miss, who, poor thing, was too young to think of matrimony, or could not bring herself to like the man; and to force young people's inclinations was a cruel case. With this plea several unlucky pretenders were satisfied, and gave over the pursuit. The 'squires returned to their game; the merchant to his counting-house; the captain to his crew; and the minister to his parish. At last the hero arrived that was to carry off the prize; who, I dare say, you already guess was an Hibernian. He made almost as short work of his courtship, as he did afterwards of his wife's fortune. For, upon a very slender acquaintance, the old sybil put him in possession of the
golden

golden bough, on condition that her family might share some of the twiggs; which was accordingly granted, and the poor girl was given up to a person that had nothing to recommend him but those attractions that are common to the rest of his countrymen, and of which the ladies are better judges than our sex. Soon after his marriage, he persuaded his wife of the reality of a mortgage of 10,000l. upon an imaginary estate of his in the county of Tipperary, that wanted to be paid off, and prevailed with her to let him dispose of her family seat to set him clear. She did so, and it alarmed all her friends, who began to suspect now what this match would end in. A distant relation of hers, who should have interposed to hinder the sale, became the purchaser; and it was sold him at an under price, with a view that it might (and some say, a promise that it should) revert to her again. However, if there was such an expectation, the poor lady's ill fate disappointed it. For this relation having rose from nothing, and been the maker of his own fortune, centered (as is usual with such people) every thing within himself, and had neither the heart to dispose of
any

any of his riches in his life-time, nor suffer any one person in the world to be the better for them, after they should be out of his possession. In short, he died without a will. The money raised by the sale of her paternal estate not being sufficient to satisfy the demands upon her husband (as few people believed it would) and having no-body to consult, that had humanity enough to save her from the jaws of ruin, the unfortunate Eliza was induced to consent to part with all she had remaining; and before she was five and twenty, saw herself and her children stripped of every acre of their inheritance. What became of it after it was converted into cash; whether it went in gaming, or other fashionable amusements; or whether by restoring the feathers borrowed on the credit of his nuptials, the daw was plucked to the quick and reduced to nothing, I shall not presume to determine. But the poor lady (her spirits quite broke with grief, shame, and despair) unable to bear the coldness of her friends, and the more cutting reproaches of her own heart, for suffering herself to be betrayed into so wretched a match, by such worthless instruments; retired to

to a very obscure place, where she died in the 26th year of her age.

Such was the end of a woman, to whom both nature and fortune had been very lavish, in indulging her with an uncommon share of their favours; till the genius of a neighbouring island interfered, and pretending to shew her the road to happiness, blundered, and directed her the wrong way. Those of her acquaintance that knew her story, pitied her, and never spoke of her but with tenderness; whilst others that stood afar off, the grave matrons and old maids, that deal out judgments and calamities at second hand, said, "It was but a just punishment upon her for having married an Irishman." The little boy you saw, is now at the gentleman's house where we visited yesterday, who was formerly an admirer of his mamma, and will take care of his education. Whether he has any brothers or sisters living, I know not, nor what is become of them if they are.

Here Sir Harry finished his relation, and by his manner of telling it, shewed he was sensibly touched with the lady's misfortunes, and had a more than ordinary regard for her; (nor could I be wholly

wholly unconcerned, when I recollected my sister's fate was similar) and this made me suspect what he made no scruple of owning when we were by ourselves, viz. that he had once made his addressees to Eliza himself; who, I wish, said he, sighing, had had the steadiness and resolution of my Sophia, and she might then have been happy, though not with me. Her story indeed affords a lesson to parents, to be very careful in what hands they leave a daughter with a large fortune, as well as to the ladies in general, to be cautious in the choice of their guardians, and still more so in that of their admirers; which last particular they may think worthy their consideration, as a man may *now* marry half a score women if he pleases, without being guilty either of fornication or adultery.

We were again discoursing on these matters after dinner, when the post, which goes past Sir Harry's three times a week, brought us a whole packet of letters, each of us two or three apiece. The duce! said lady Bellair, the reading these will take us up till bed-time; so it was put to the vote, Whether any or all of them should be read? Sir Harry objected to this, as there might possibly be
some

some news that concerned the public; and if there was, he humbly conceived it ought to be communicated, and took one of the evening posts out of his packet. The company allowed of what he had said, and desired him to read it out, which he did, beginning, "From Saturday, November 6, to Tuesday, November 9. Letters from the last Flander's mail agree with the Brussels gazette, that the king of Prussia is gone to meet the Russian army." — How provoking is this, said I! pray Sir Harry, if there be any thing worth hearing, let us have it; but none of your Brussels gazette. He then run over the paper to himself, whilst we were talking, and cried, "Ha! did she so? — but I do not know whether we should be glad or sorry; let those that knew her best, determine." Pray, my dear, said lady Bellair, What point is it that wants to be determined? Whether the following paragraph be good news or not, returned he. "Last Friday noon died at her house in Jermyn street, aged 60, the relict of Francis Bevil, Esq; by whose death a considerable fortune comes to her son, a young gentleman in Yorkshire." Perhaps, my dear, said Sophia, your other

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letters

letters may mention something more about it; if so, we will allow your reading them, though they do not regard the public. Sir Harry then pulled two more letters out of his packet, one of which was sealed with black wax; and when he had taken off the cover, we saw it was a sheet of paper wrote full on every side. Let me see, said he, this is from a fellow of a college in Oxford, whose hand I know, an acquaintance of Bevil's, that is now at his house. "I'll be hanged then, says lady Bellair, if this fellow of a college did not bury the old gentlewoman, and has sent you a copy of the funeral sermon." Very true, madam, replied he, when he had read it; and the text is, "Frailty, thy name is Woman." Here I have an account (continued he) that the old lady, notwithstanding her fondness for her new found daughter, and reconciliation with her son-in-law, has left away great part of her fortune from both of them, and settled it upon the steward; to whom it seems she was privately married, presently after he had been discharged. But, as it is to be hoped, she had not a great deal in her power to dispose of, the old hypocritical jade may not have hurt

hurt my friend so much as she intended. This steward, I remember to have heard Bevil say, was always a great favourite with her, in his father's life-time."

We were all extremely surprized at this piece of intelligence, and wondered that any person so near her end, should practise and continue a deceit to the last, since a death-bed generally throws off every disguise. But Sir Harry interrupted here, by telling us, that she was carried off suddenly, and so had not time to set matters to rights, had her intentions been ever so good. Sophia then observed, that this was a proper supplement to the story we had heard at breakfast; and that the moral of them both put together, was, "Beware of counterfeits, for such are abroad."

Esteem yourself particularly happy, my dear Amoret, in having a companion for life, whose character, even without a fortune, would have recommended him to any discerning woman; and whose principles would never have suffered him to appear under a disguise, or do any thing that looked like a trick, whatever might have been his circumstances. And then, thank that good providence which directed his choice to

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you.

you. No happiness on earth can equal the union of two worthy hearts. Here I see a young gentleman and his lady as much beloved in the neighbourhood, as they are by each other; and, I suppose, for that reason. For in the country, the credit of people rises or falls in proportion to their domestic character; which, in town, is entirely overlooked. A nobleman is soon expected down to take possession of a seat he has lately purchased within two miles of Sir Harry's; but he will make no figure, I will venture to say, unless he follows his example. The young baronet and his Sophia have all the elegance, without the luxury of people of fortune; and by preserving this distinction, never receive a friend, or confer a favour, but with a good grace. No two things (Sir Harry thinks) differ more than generosity and extravagance; for the latter, he says, will harbour in the same breast with avarice, but it is impossible the former ever should. Next week I shall set out with Aspasia for home; and though it is to meet Erastus, yet I shall leave this charming couple with some regret. Sophia has promised to keep up a weekly correspondence with her sister, that they may

for London's Bookshop Mrs. Barts 1844

may share almost every occurrence of their lives; and added, she wished that it was in her power to split her title, as they split freeholds in O——shire, that Aspasia might have half. So that the privilege of place and precedence, which a witty writer calls “Our sex’s paradise on earth,” and has created feuds between people, whom nothing else could set at variance, will make no difference between these amiable women; as, to confess the truth, it seldom does, when we have any other qualification to recommend us.

Adieu! dear madam; and though you are apt to entertain very partial thoughts of your friends, it will be but strict justice to believe me, with the greatest regard, both for your present and future happiness,

Your faithful and affectionate,

SOPHRONIA.

F I N I S.

LETTERS TO THE LADIES.

any more than every occurrence of
 their lives; and added, she wished that
 it was in her power to tell her tale,
 as they might behold in O—thine
 that Africa might have had. So that
 the privilege of peace and protection,
 which a witty writer calls "Our sex's
 grandest on earth," and has created friends
 between people, whom nothing else
 could at first have made so dis-
 tinct; between the noble woman;
 as, to console the freedom does,
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 recommend us.



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 and future happiness.

Your faithful and affectionate

SOPHIA.

M I N I S

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